OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER



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THE MAKING OF CRYSTAL CASTLES

Why Atari's coin-op hit was so much more than an isometric Pac-Man

INDY'S BACK! THE FATE OF ATLANTIS

Behind the scenes of the greatest Indiana Jones game of all time







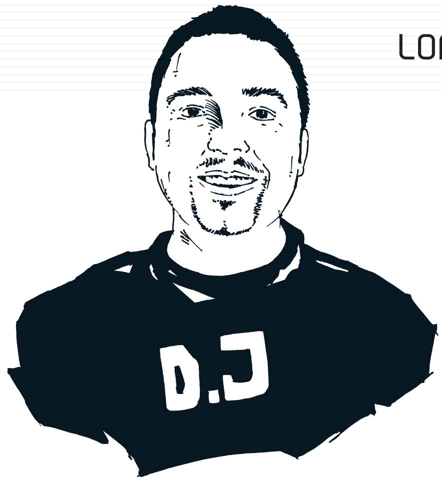
The history of ZELDA

Come worship at the temple of Hyrule's greatest hero

RETRO GAMES
R-G
AGES 30+

Original Nintendo® Seal of Quality

LOADING...



So here we are at the start of another 50 issues of everyone's favourite retro magazine, and as you can see from the front cover, future issues of **Retro Gamer** are going to be better than ever.**

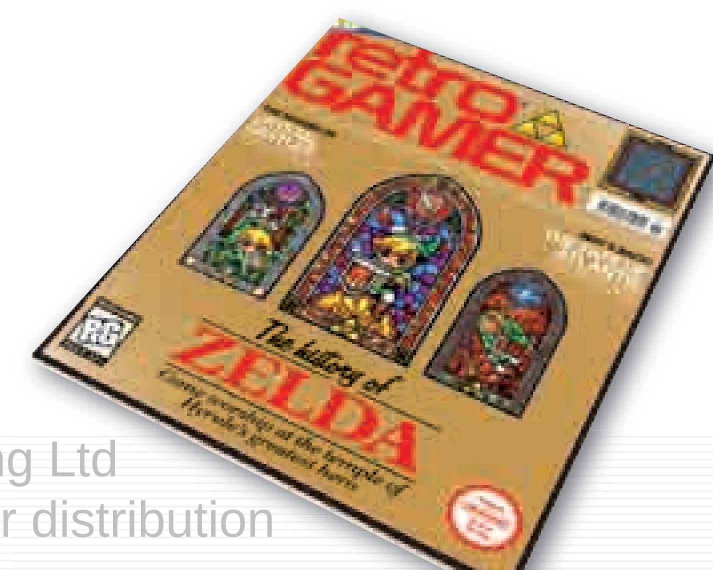
But don't take my word for it, flick through the current issue and see for yourself. *The Legend Of Zelda* is one of Nintendo's most popular franchises and it was nearly impossible to cram the entire series into just 12 pages. Luckily, we managed to find a way and you can start reading about Hyrule's legendary hero on page 26.

And if you think our in-depth *Zelda* feature is good just wait until you see the sheer number of 'Making ofs' we have lined up for you this month. There are archaeological hi-jinks with *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, a trip back to the early Eighties with *Choplifter*, *Crystal Castles* and *Stellar 7* and an in-depth look at Irem's superb *R-Type Delta*.

The latest DS games are reviewed, we finally managed to sit down and watch the brilliant *The King Of Kong* and we've even found time to lambast the appallingly bad *Pit-Fighter*. Life never stops here at **Retro Gamer** and we've already managed to secure some truly excellent content for the nest issue. In the meantime, you best get on and read the current one, as there's a hell of a lot to get through.

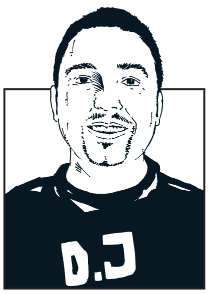


Enjoy the magazine



THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE ZELDA GAME



DARRAN JONES

Stepping out on to Hyrule Field for the first time in *Ocarina Of Time* and realising that I could go potentially anywhere. I still get excited thinking about it now.
Expertise: Picking holes in *GTA IV*
Currently playing:
Magic: The Gathering
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



ASHLEY DAY

I have a real soft spot for the moment Link washes up on the beach of Koholint Island, as well as the stormy opening to *Link To The Past*. They were only 2D but they were still much more atmospheric than anything the 3D games have to offer.
Expertise: The games of Team 17, MSX, Sega's *Shining Force* series
Currently playing:
Super Mario Galaxy
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



STUART HUNT

Beating *The Legend Of Zelda* and finding amusement in the fact that the all-powerful Ganon was actually a blue pig that could turn himself invisible.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Pac-Man Vs.
Favourite game of all time:
Pac-Man Vs.



DAVID CROOKES

Best moment? The short period between inserting the game into the console and waiting in huge anticipation at the grand adventure I'm about to have. Never fails to bring out the goosebumps.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing:
Darwinia
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



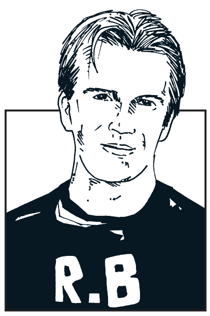
PAUL DRURY

The moment I saw *Ocarina Of Time* playing through the window of Gamestation and realised I was going to have a very merry Christmas that year.
Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing:
Buster Buddies
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



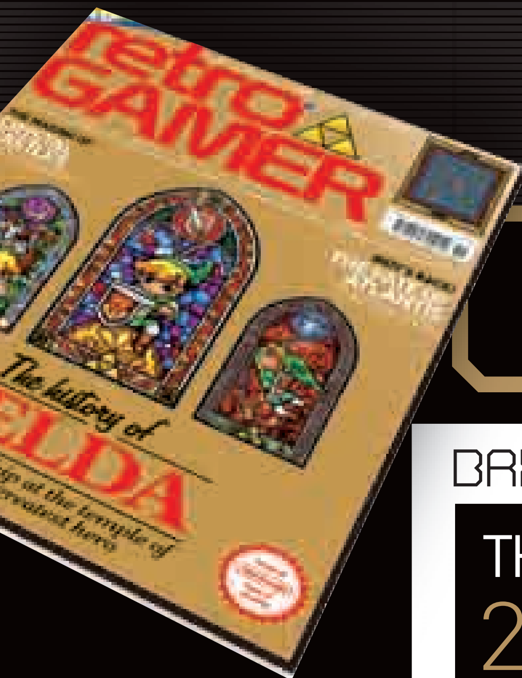
CRAIG GRANNELL

The bit where the protagonist jumps over the crocodile-infested waters and blows away evil robots with his gun. (What do you mean "Have you ever actually played a *Zelda* game?")
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
Space Invaders Extreme/developing carpal tunnel
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



RICHARD BURTON

In *Ocarina Of Time* when Link arrives at the Temple of Time. He sees the Master Sword in the ground and a transformation follows; from kiddy Link to adult Link. Lovely stuff.
Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense
Currently playing:
Solar Jetman (NES)
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner

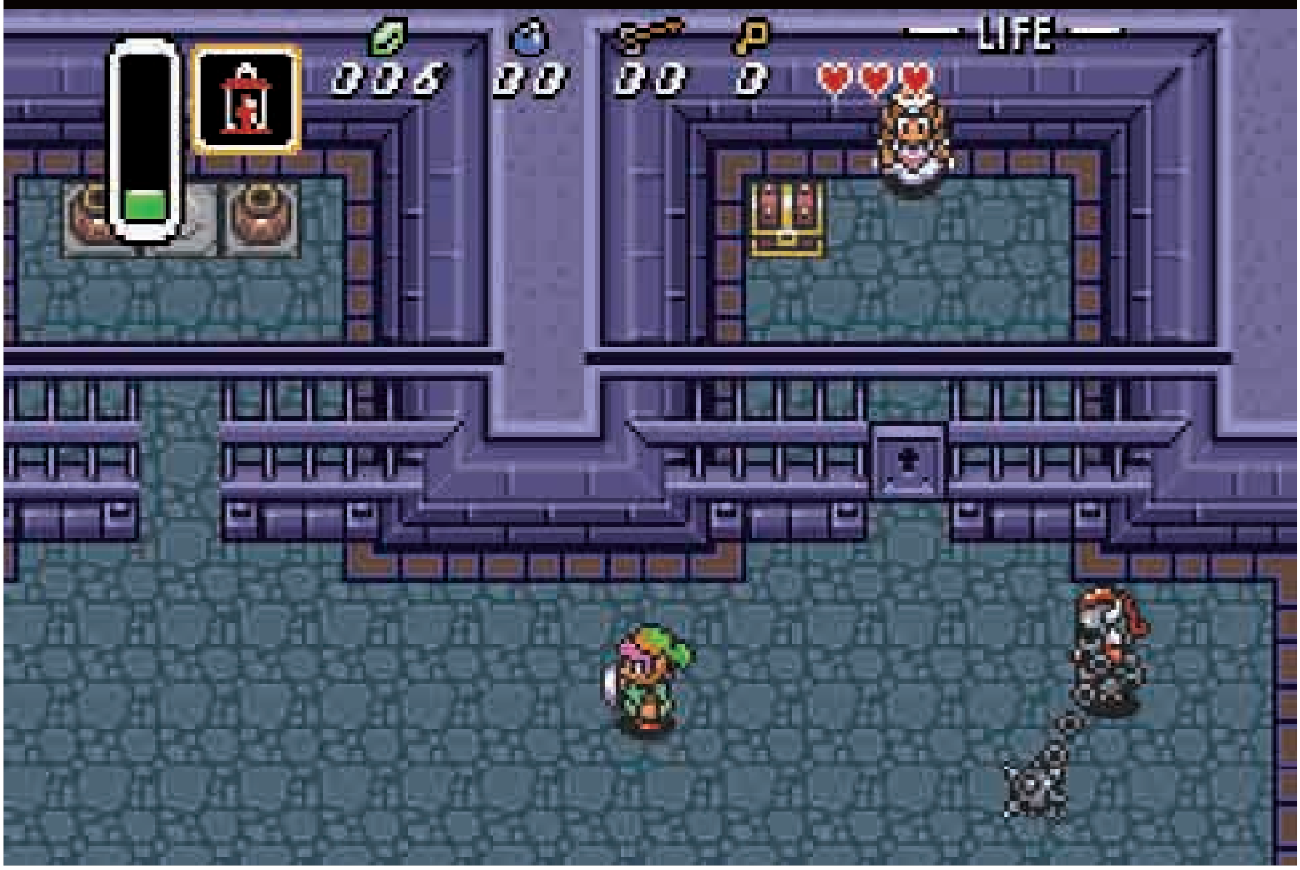


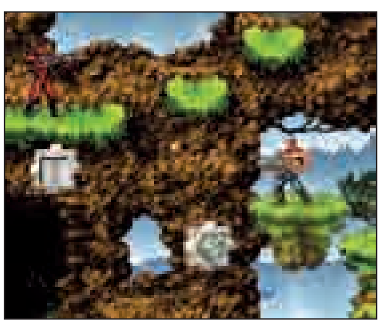
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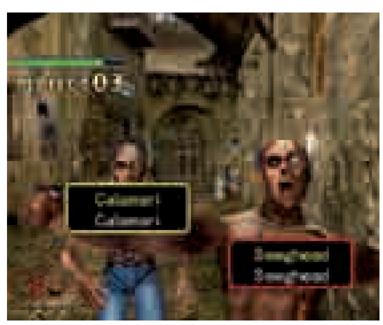
BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES

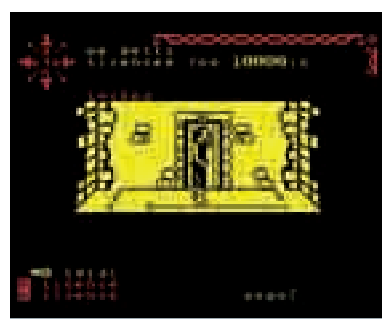
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At-a-glance retro sections…









ESSENTIALS

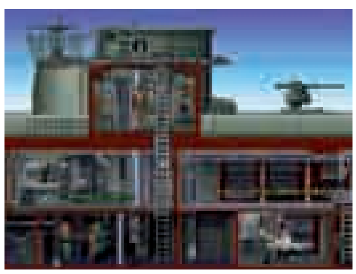
RETROINSPECTION – PC-ENGINE GT

62 NEC'S PC-ENGINE WAS SO SUCCESSFUL IN ITS HOMELAND THAT IT EVENTUALLY RELEASED A HANDHELD MODEL. SADLY FOR THE JAPANESE DEVELOPER, IT WAS A CASE OF TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE



THE MAKING OF…

44 WITH EVERY FILM MAGAZINE GOING BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE LATEST INDIANA JONES MOVIE, WE FELT WE'D DO THINGS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY… SO HERE'S THE LOWDOWN ON THE FATE OF ATLANTIS. ENJOY



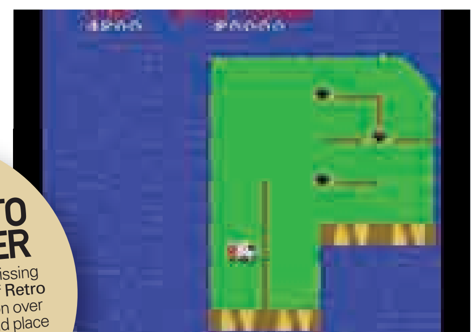
RETRORATED

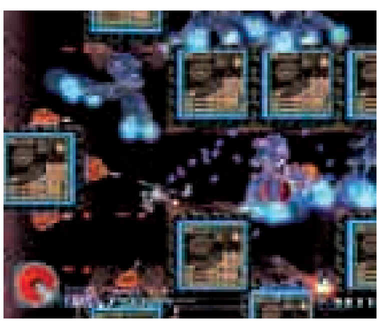


THE GAMES LISTING…

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it

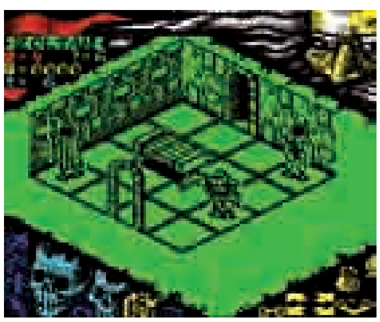






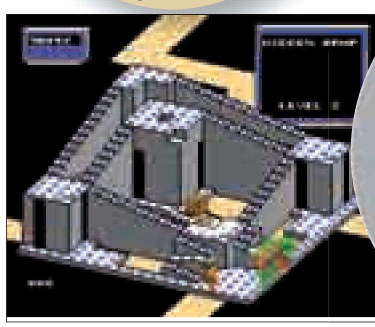
THE MAKING OF…
R-TYPE DELTA

72 Find out why Irem took a five-year hiatus before returning with its stunning 32-bit blast-'em-up.



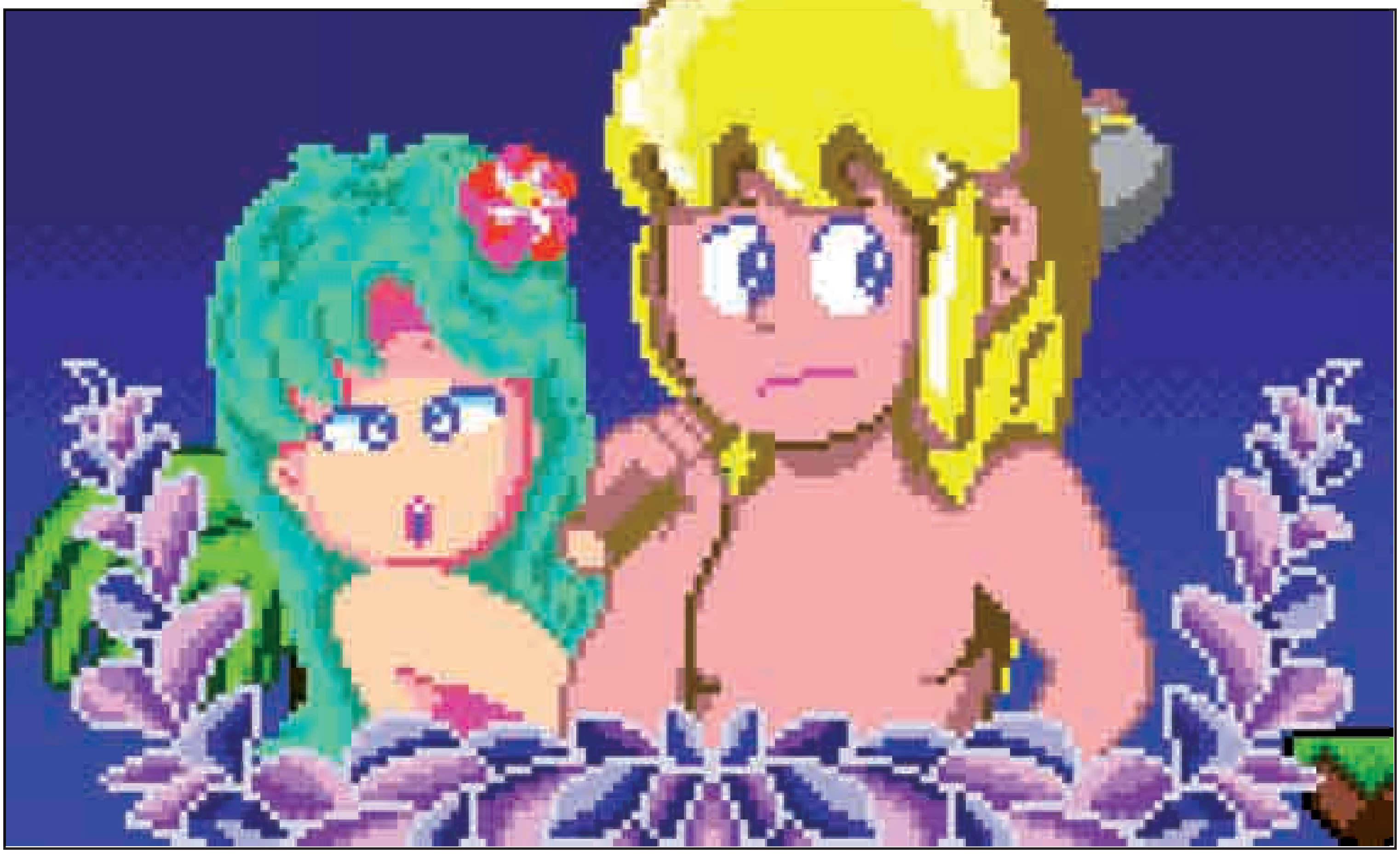
WHY YOU MUST PLAY
HEROQUEST

76 There have been many board-game conversions over the years, but this effort by Gremlin is easily the best.



THE MAKING OF…
CRYSTAL CASTLES

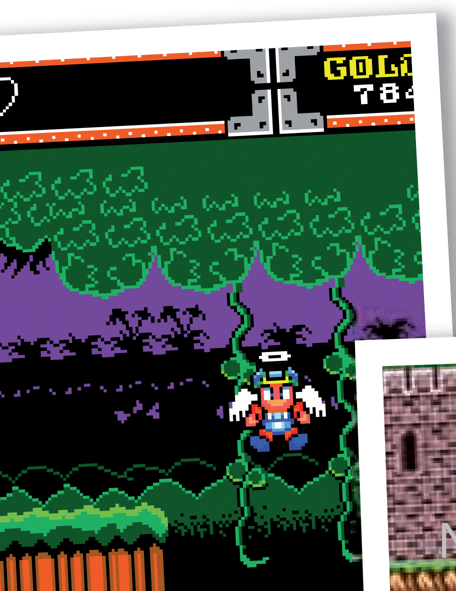
78 Creator Franz Xaver Lanzinger talks about isometric levels, dropping out of a maths degree and creating Bentley Bear.

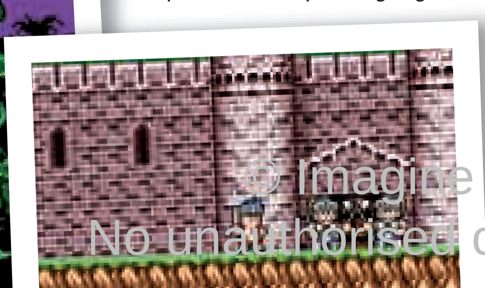


IS IT ANY WONDER?

WE TALK TO **ROBIN MORNINGSTAR** ABOUT HIS WONDER BOY SCRIPT





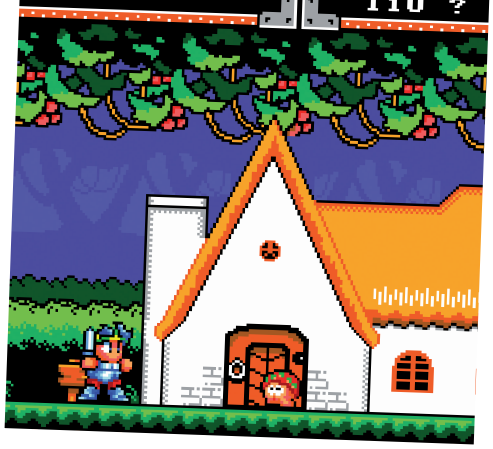


For all the flack that Uwe Boll seems to attract, the German auteur certainly seems to love his videogames. Nearly half of all his movie projects have been based on videogame franchises, giving us a clear indication that he, at least, seems to be a man after our own heart.

Uwe began his lucrative videogame adaptation career by tackling Sega's *The House Of The Dead*, and would follow up with several projects based on *Alone In The Dark*, *BloodRayne*, *Dungeon Siege* and (more recently) *Postal*. So scrolling through his IMDB CV we can easily attain that Uwe is a Sega fanboy who probably owned a PC or two when he was a kid.

A little while ago though, the news surfaced that the director had his sights set on tackling another big Sega franchise – a thought that brought both jubilation and panic to the online community. For many, just the notion that someone would want to try to tackle a *Wonder Boy* movie (even if Boll was doing the charging) was nonsensical. Despite encompassing a fulsome series of quality games, it's a franchise that has been lost to neglect by its parent Sega.

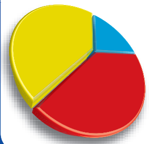
There was one person, however, who saw potential in the idea before whetting Boll's interest. Writer, and professed *Wonder Boy* fan, Robin Morningstar set about scribing a 66-page screenplay based on the game, and has been trying to get the project off the ground ever since. His efforts have brought him interest in his script from Uwe, Aussie *Neighbours* actress Caitlin Stacey (who we are reliably informed plays Rachel Kennedy) and many fans of the *Wonder Boy* games.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FORUM

VISIT WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM/

Do you think films based on videogames are ever a good idea?



- Yes, *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* is the bastion of classic cinema **40%**
- No, I threw up brain cells after *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*. **40%**
- What the heck is a *Resident Evil: Apocalypse?* **20%**

Retro Gamer had the opportunity to speak to Robin about his script and the problems he's finding getting it the green light

What made you decide to choose *Wonder Boy* as the basis of your script?

I was in hospital for a long time and when I came out I suffered with severe memory loss. I didn't remember much and I spent a lot of time playing retro systems trying to rekindle some kind of my adolescence. Writing was part of my therapy and the two sort of came together. After all, you can only write what you know. First came the scripts for *Kid Chameleon*, then *Prince Of Persia*, and then *Wonder Boy*. *Wonder Boy* really grabbed me though, given that in his origin – now that he has one – he's a man reduced to a teenager by a freak mishap. His face and age don't match, his body is weaker, he's a miracle and a freak. It resonated.

The early *Wonder Boy* games have traditionally been bright, cartoony games, but your script is far more adult and goes for a darker fantasy approach. What was the reason for this?

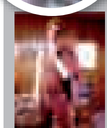
First, *Wonder Boy* had to be a teenager to avoid replacing some moppet every movie for hitting puberty. And teenage years are dark! Second, the people who played the *Wonder Boy* game and all of its sequels are now in their early to late twenties. You've got to move with the fans and get complex. When the *Street Fighter* movie finally got made every fan wanted a dramatic, ensemble revenge piece where only one fighter could get their man. But we got a buddy team-up of two-dimensional characters saving the world! You can't sell out long-term fans to get more of them by aiming younger and playing it safe. You'll lose the fans that grew up with the franchise whereas those newer people would have turned up anyway if the movie was good.

How have the fans responded to the script?

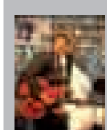
They love it! I sent it to the biggest *Wonder Boy* fan site on the net, www.geocities.com/wonderboyland/, and the webmaster, Furanku Leone, had a few issues with some of the names I'd made up, and tossed a few geek moments my way, but other than that it went down well. I named a character Furanku in his honour. A lot of fans have downloaded the script and have been very happy with it. Caitlin Stacey, who plays Rachel Kinski/Kennedy on the Aussie soap *Neighbours*, has read the script and she loves it, too. She was originally reading an unrelated script of mine, but then Uwe Boll and *Wonder Boy* came into play, I sent Caitlin that.



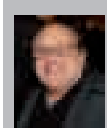
WHO WE'D LIKE TO SEE PLAY WONDER BOY



STUART
"I'm going to say Jon Heder, but only because he looks a little like the *Wonder Boy* image used for the SMS box art of *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*."
Probability rating: 5/5



STEPHEN
"Michael J Fox (circa Eighties) would have been perfect. It's the first name that's popped into my head, so if you're looking for a better reason than that then seriously bad luck."
Probability rating: 3/5



DARRAN
"I'd like to see Danny DeVito play the character. He's the right height, has the same colour hair as Sega's hero and I hear he's supposed to be pretty damn good on a skateboard as well. Damn, I've just gone and confused Wonder Boy with *Super Adventure Island*'s Master Higgins. Doh!"
Probability rating: 1/5

How did you feel when Uwe Boll expressed an interest in what you had written?

I switched from cider to cognac for the night. I was pleased. Uwe Boll is the market leader when it comes to videogame movies. He's got the nerve to risk it time after time and gets better each time. He said about his adaptation of *Alone In The Dark* that he had learnt that 'script matters'. So I approached him, we talked, and he liked the script. It sounds like the start of one of those jokes, doesn't it? A German and an amnesiac walk into a bar…

And what did it feel like when Sega refused to participate?

It's frustrating. The script is there, the producer is there, the girl from *Neighbours* is there as well, and the fans are there. It's like creating a perfect cocktail and then getting refused the licence to actually serve it. The strangest part was that years ago I was emailing Sega of Japan and they said that they would have no problem with a *Wonder Boy* movie, as long as they weren't having to fund it. So I was upset and bewildered, switching from cognac to whisky. I received a lot of emails from fans doing the same.

Did they ever give an official reason as to why they wouldn't allow you to use the character?

They said they had no interest in resurrecting the character. The fact *Wonder Boy* was re-released the other year kind of throws doubt on that. I don't think the problem can be with Uwe Boll because he's done a Sega adaptation before with *The House Of The Dead*. It can't be the quality of the script, and I'm sure I haven't met Mike Hayes, the COO of Sega Europe, and spilt his pint in a bar (though I'd love to have a drink with him). So I don't know really what to make of it. But if they don't want to revive the character they should let us revive it instead.

It's a shame you've hit a brick wall. Are there any other avenues that you can explore?

I came up with more plans than MacGyver! Haha! Sega and Westone (who co-own *Wonder Boy*) have an unusual arrangement whereby Sega owns the character, but Westone owns the code. Westone used that to port *Wonder Boy* on to other systems under their own brand name of *Dynastic Hero*. I approached Westone about branding the film *Dynastic Hero* but they put up a wall of silence. Next, Uwe and I discussed rewriting the script to be a film of *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* and approached Capcom. However, they are doing something new with the property and needed total control of it.

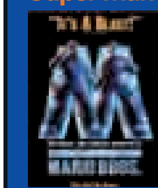
Finally, is there anything Retro Gamer readers could do to help out with the project?

Sign the *Wonder Boy* petition site, join the MySpace page, join the Facebook page, write to Sega, email Sega, you get the idea. Or we could all hold hands and sing that song by Tenacious D. '*Wonder Boy* what is the secret of your power'.

SIFTING THE GOOD INTO CRAP

We take a look at cinemas' blatant maltreatment of our beloved videogames

Super Mario Bros



So bad it's brilliant. That's a lie. Bob Hoskins and some guy team up for what is possibly the worst game-to-film adaptation ever made. Pulling the cheapest of money-saving stunts, it's the most ill-conceived way to waste 104 minutes of your eyesight. And it kids itself brilliantly with the lame tagline: "This Ain't No Game, It's A Live-Action Thrill Ride!" Surely that should be: 'This Ain't Nothing Like The Game, It's A Live-Action Piece Of S**t!'
RG lame Rating 5/5

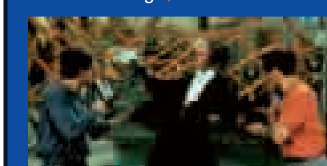
Street Fighter

It takes a special kind of suck to mess up a film about the world's best fighters. Leaving aside the fact it looks like it was written and acted by a bunch of *Street Fighter* fans, this movie made the mistake of getting our hopes up by hinting at lots of cool fights – like a cage clash between Ryu and Vega – and then kicking us in the teeth by having the police turn up and ruin the fun. What a load of tosh. **RG** lame rating 5/5



Double Dragon

Not only was *Double Dragon* the proud owner of a duff movie, but also a crummy cartoon show, too. The movie casts Robert Patrick as a fruity made-up villain styled on Vanilla Ice, a young Mark Dacascos and Scott Wolf. Again, kid-friendly martial artistry meant the film was littered with lame fighting scenes tied together with some rubbish plot about a power-giving amulet.
RG lame Rating 4/5



LAST-MINUTE NEWS



Will this be doomed before it's started?

MORTAL KOMBAT TEAMS UP WITH DC COMICS

Sticking with the beat-'em-up theme that pervades this page, we felt duty bound to announce that the latest *Mortal Kombat* will allow you to face off against heroes from the DC universe.

Before you start whooping and hollering and picturing Batman having his spine ripped out by Sub Zero, we think you should know that no fatalities will actually be appearing in the game. Which, if you think about it, is kind of like having a *Sonic The Hedgehog* game with Mario as the main character.

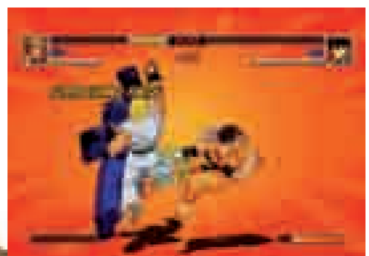
While we can see why DC Comics would be reluctant to allow the likes of Superman, Batman and… alright, so we don't know any other DC heroes, to suffer any grievous bodily harm, it does make you wonder why Midway pursued the licence, when the key element that separates *Mortal Kombat* from all other fighting franchises will no longer be in place.

CAPCOM GOES OLD-SCHOOL

PREPARE FOR REMAKE CITY

Regular readers will no doubt have noticed that, along with Sega and Nintendo, we have a special place in our hearts for Capcom. Now it's not down to bias, but simply because they're three of the main publishers who are never afraid to go back to classic franchises and give them a fresh new airing.

Anyway, all our attention is on Capcom at the moment, as it has some truly excellent titles due for release in the run-up to the end of the year. The arcade debut of *Street Fighter IV* could not have failed to escape your notice – we mention it every flippin' month – and although Capcom has yet to reveal which home consoles it will be appearing on, even the biggest of fools can see that a 360 and PS3 announcement is as certain as Ryu dragon punching Sagat.



It's taking its time, but we're sure that when it arrives *Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix* is going to be a knockout.

While all our recent focus has been on *Street Fighter IV*, the brand new super duper high-definition all-singing and dancing version of *Street Fighter II* appears to have fallen by the wayside. It's looking incredibly impressive – although the super detailed visuals do show up the ancient-ness of the original animation – but it still appears to be a while away from being released.

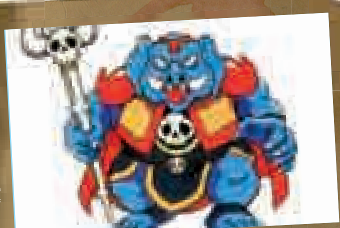
Thank goodness then that there's plenty more Capcom goodness on the way. While we've already covered the incoming *Bionic Commando*, which will be appearing on the PS3 and 360, Capcom has also recently announced that a re-imagining of the original 2D game is on the way as well. Dubbed *Bionic Commando Rearmed*, it's already looking mighty special and has a graphical style that's very reminiscent of the PSP's update of *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. It's essentially an enhanced update/homage of the NES game (which was notably different to the arcade version), and like that original US version, it won't feature any references to the Nazi party.



Excellent, another superb shooter is heading to Xbox Live Arcade. Expect the definitive review very, very soon.

Other gems to look forward to include the stupendously good *1942: Joint Strike* and *Wolf Of The Battlefield: Commando 3*. Although we've not seen anything on *Commando 3* since it was first announced, we've just come back from a two-hour long stint on *1942: Joint Strike* and can confirm that it's currently shaping up very, very nicely indeed. Created by Backbone Entertainment (who are also working on *Commando 3*) it's a superb two-player blaster that features, some lush looking visuals, excellent play mechanics and plenty of references to past games in the series. All games – with the exception of *Street Fighter IV* – are heading to Xbox Live Arcade and the PlayStation Network in the coming months. Let's just hope that other companies follow suit.

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



GANON

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

Without bad villains there would be no good heroes. What would Batman be without the Joker? What would Sonic be without Dr Robotnik? Complete rubbish, that's what.

First appearance: *The Legend Of Zelda*

Distinguishing features: Looking like a pig

Weapon of choice: Trident

Most Likely to: Change his name

Least likely to: Rule Hyrule

Unusual fact: The cartoon version of Ganon was voiced by the late Len Carlson

THE SOUL STILL BURNS

THE BEST SOUL CALIBUR EVER HEADS TO LIVE ARCADE

Now here's an amazing piece of news. To celebrate the upcoming release of *Soul Calibur IV*, Namco has announced that the Dreamcast version – which in our minds is the best one of the lot – will soon be heading to Xbox Live Arcade.

Due to appear around the same time as *Soul Calibur IV*, *SCDC* (we've made that abbreviation up ourselves by the way) will boast enhanced hi-def visuals – even though it still looks amazing on the Dreamcast via VGA – the usual Xbox Live Achievements, but no online play.

We'll admit that this last bit of news is something of a kick in the teeth, but it at least ensures that fans of the series will opt for the Live-enabled *Soul Calibur IV* instead. No price has been announced as yet, but don't be surprised if it ends up selling for 1,200 points, which roughly equates to around a tenner.

If we're completely honest that's still something of a bargain – even if you can pick up the Dreamcast original for around five pounds – and it's yet another Dreamcast port to add to a slowly growing list. And best of all there won't be a Jedi Master or Sith Lord in sight.



The original US Dreamcast cover in all its glory.

retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past doesn't mean there aren't plenty of games and events to look forward to. Every month we list all the exciting games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER

IF YOU WANT **RETRO GAMER** TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK



MAY

SUPER SMASH BROS BRAWL

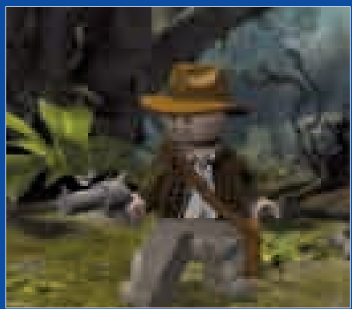
Released: 30 May

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: 34.99

Format: Wii

It's taken a while, but we've finally managed to secure a copy of *Smash Bros* and it's absolutely brilliant. We would have reviewed it this very issue, but there's so much to uncover on it that we've decided to spend a little more time on it. Sonic has quickly become the brawler of choice, but Snake gets a lot of play as well.



JUNE

LEGO INDIANA JONES

Released: 06 June

Publisher: LucasArts

Price: £29.99-£49.99

Format: 360, PS3, DS, Wii, PS2

Traveller's Tales is at it again, raiding LucasArts' back catalogue and a box of Danish building blocks to rebuild the three original *Indy* tales in Lego. And we can't wait. *Lego Star Wars* was a lot of fun and there's no reason that the developer can't produce the same magic again. We're a little bit concerned about where the series will go in the future: '*Lego Labyrinth*', '*Lego Willow*'?



JUNE

NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD

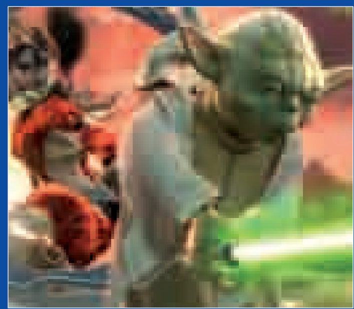
Released: 20 June

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

It's back in the diary, yes, and it would appear that *New International Track & Field* is going all *Super Smash Bros* on us, adding more characters and pushing back its release date until highly volatile tempers explode. To be honest, we're not too bothered that we have to wait a little longer to get our hands on the game, as we're sure it will be great fun.



JULY

SOUL CALIBUR IV

Released: July

Publisher: Ubisoft

Price: £49.99

Format: 360, PS3

Namco's popular swashbuckling series is making its way to next-gen consoles. Early word is positive, with hints at new characters, including Jedi Master Yoda for Xbox 360 and Sith Lord Vader for PS3; plenty of play modes; and an online battle feature. This makes us all the more eager for this game's summer release. In the meantime we'll just have to play the Dreamcast version.



JULY

SOUL CALIBUR

Released: July

Publisher: Namco

Price: 1,200 Points

Format: XBLA

There are two exciting *Soul Calibur* entries in the Retro diary for July. The next-gen *SC IV* (see above) and the now-confirmed Dreamcast port of *Soul Calibur* to XBLA. Sega released several Dreamcast hits on the Wii, and now Namco is releasing *Soul Calibur* hot on the heels of *Rez, Mr Driller, Ikaruga,* and *Triggerheart Excelica*. The lack of online play is annoying, but it's a small price to pay for owning such a great beat-'em-up.



JULY

RETRO FUSION '08

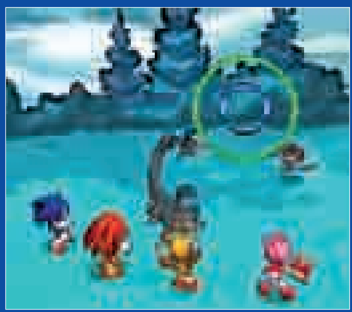
Dates: 19-20 July

Location: Leamington Rugby Club, Warwickshire

Admission: £12

Website: www.retrofusiononline.com/event08

We've always enjoyed our trips to Chris Wilkins' retro events, and we're expecting his latest to be better than ever. Taking place at a brand new location, and once again supporting the Everyman Campaign, Retro Fusion '08 is already on our 'to do' lists. If you're a fan of retro gaming and drinking we suggest you sign up for tickets as soon as possible.



SEPTEMBER

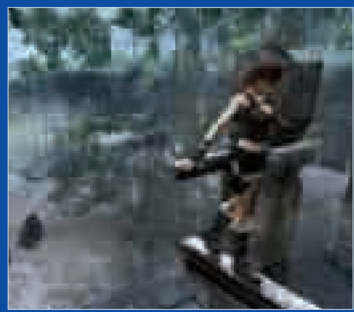
SONIC CHRONICLES: THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

Released: September

Publisher: Sega

Format: DS

We love Sega's Stefan McGarry, and not just because he sends us free stuff. The man is a complete legend, one of our favourite PRs and a great singer, too. He also showed us a demo of *Sonic Chronicles* recently, which makes him even more awesome. Still, this space is supposed to be for *Sonic Chronicles*, so let us just assure you that Sega and BioWare's collaboration is shaping up to be one of DS's best RPGs so far.



OCTOBER

TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD

Released: October

Publisher: Eidos

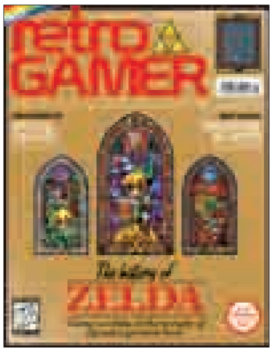
Price: £49.99

Format: 360, PS3

You can't really blame Eidos for releasing a third title in as many years. Following on directly from *Legend*, Lara once again finds herself up to her pretty neck in bad guys and ancient artefacts. Expect puzzles, a better aiming system, and a clever new engine that keeps track of incidental things like tracks in mud and dead bodies so you can find your way around more easily.

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STAR LETTER

SPOKEN LIKE A TRUE HEADCASE

Dear Retro Gamer,
I was raised on a diet of VIC-20 unexpanded, Atari 2600, Commodore 64, and Amiga 500. I remember designing a series of advertising brochures, when I was 13, for Sinclair, Commodore, and BBC Micro (about which I knew nothing but could draw the owl). I still have the enthusiastic replies complete with their gifted bundle of pamphlets. Sinclair didn't send a C5, which I was gutted about.

Like most kids I was indecisive about what I wanted for Christmas once I found out that Santa was a monumental lie. It was a closely fought battle between a BigTrak and the VIC-20. I chose the VIC, which came with one game, *Jelly Monsters*.

Jelly Monsters on VIC-20 reshaped my childhood and inspired me into full-scale DEFCON 1 gaming. Weeks were spent trying to get to that ever-elusive next level and find out what fruit would be displayed as the bonus.

Colin McAdam, who was playing for Ranger's FC, lived two doors down and he too was hooked. He would pop in almost daily and suddenly it was premiership gaming.

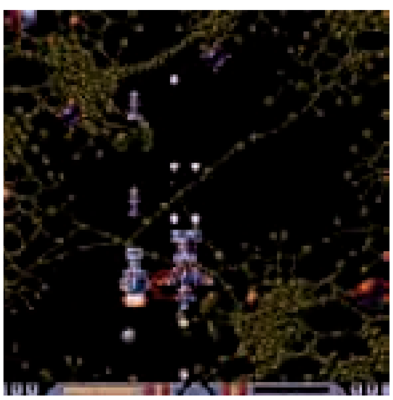
Skramble (Rabbit Software) was another belter for the VIC-20. It was based on the arcade game called *Scramble* but wasn't as good. You only had one life, and if you crashed and burned near to the end without completing it, it was maddening but completely addictive.

On a totally unrelated subject, I met a girl called Victoria (Vic) whose middle name is not 20. We got married, and for our first Christmas she bought me a C64 and a Spectrum 48K. She has since bought me a chip board from an actual *Scramble* arcade game. I think I'll use it as a dinner tray.

I'm an actor and I work a lot in videogames, providing character voices to many titles like *Theme Park World*, *Star Wars Racer*, *Fable*, *Medieval*. I'm currently doing the voices for Pete Doherty, Jeremy Clarkson, Gordon Brown, and Sylvester Stallone among others in a series on ITV 1 called *Headcases*. It's like *Spitting Image* but in CG. I would have preferred it, of course, had they used sprites. Anyway, thank you for reading my ramble and for providing an excellent trip down memory lane. Cheers.

Lewis Macleod

Thanks for your letter, Lewis. We haven't had a chance to watch Headcases *yet, but when we do and we see Jeremy Clarkson, in the back of our minds we'll know he reads* **Retro Gamer** *(well, kind of). By the way, if you could shove a copy of the magazine under the nose of Henry Naylor that would be great, we'd be grateful for some* **Retro Gamer** *product placement in the show. Here's a binder and T-shirt, consider it as some kind of bribery.*



» *Xenon*: Looks brilliant; sounds brilliant; plays okay.



EVERY MONTH, ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy **Retro Gamer** T-shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a snazzy new **Retro Gamer** binder. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

Dear Retro Gamer,
I'm André, a retro gaming nut from Sweden. I'm very interested in the videogame Stone Age and really think you should consider including a music section in the magazine as there are so many interesting things you could cover.

You could write about the history of the SID chip, mention the amazing achievements on the PC-internal speaker (like Xenon 2, for example), and tell us about the stunning Play! concerts.

The **Retro Gamer** library has grown over the years and I can't possibly be the only person to frequently browse the entire mag in search of an article covering a specialist gaming subject.

I believe **Retro Gamer** over all is a very interesting and pleasant read. I like the range of articles – from very personal features to the fact-stuffed definitive guides. But I do have a moan. I think a lot of nonsense makes its way into the magazine, particularly in the captions – which sometimes feel like they're only there to fill up the space. Why not leave them blank or squeeze in some interesting facts about the frame rate, sprites, or colours? Keeping to the point.

Also, I think that the Hero/Villain of the Month could improve for the same reason. I hope you agree with some of the points raised. I would appreciate a short answer in any form. And keep up the good work.

André

Hi Andre,
Great letter. We really like your suggestion about running a feature that looks at the influence music has had on videogames. At the moment we're trying to incorporate more unique and specialist features into the mag, so don't be surprised if you see us poach your idea. With regard to the captions, while we take our passion seriously, we still like to have a laugh and hope that comes through in our writing. We completely agree with you about the Hero/Villain boxouts though. They are starting to feel a little stale, which is why we're currently looking at jazzing up our news section with pictures of dogs dressed in bee costumes..

PARENTAL GUIDANCE

Dear Retro Gamer,
I was reading a parent's comments regarding videogames recently and I worry that the youth of today are sorely missing out. Allow



me to explain. This year I turned 36, which is the same age my father was when I first got a ZX Spectrum. He disapprovingly looked on as I played 'just one more game of *Atic Atak*' before I promised to make a start on my homework.

However, it seems that today's parents actually accept their children's gaming habits or, even worse, play along with them (no doubt trying to deny their own aging). Don't they realise they're damaging their child's enjoyment? Part of the appeal is the slightly illicit nature of videogames. It's playing games when you should be doing something more productive with your life, son.

The youth of today will not fondly cherish the memories of *God Of War II* in the same way I do *Kokotoni Wilf*, and will grow up maladjusted, thinking that videogames are a valid pastime. We need a return to the old-school values when this kind of laziness is punished and socially unacceptable.

Still, I do applaud **Retro Gamer** for doing its bit and having those naughty adverts at the back of the magazine – the ones that cause my co-workers to judgmentally gasp as I casually flick through.

Right, I'm off now. I'm going down the park to scowl at youngsters sharing their DS with their brain trained parents. And secretly using mine to feel dirty while playing with my (emulated) miner willy.

Andrew Jenkinson

Hi Andrew,
We thoroughly enjoyed your letter. But in all seriousness, we don't think there's anything wrong with playing videogames with your kids… as long as you're forcing them to play retro games. Of course we believe it's a parent's duty to set their children down and make them play some classic 8-bit games, and teach them a thing or two about loading times and how games could actually be made using just 16 colours.

From the forum

EVERY MONTH, **RETRO GAMER** ASKS A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTS THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW…
WHAT IS YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE ZELDA VIDEOGAME?

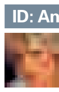


ID: SirClive



Definitely *Wind Waker*. None of this top-down handheld rubbish or dark foreboding graphics. Just bright cartoony Nintendo fun.

ID: Antiriad2097



Soul Calibur II, just so you can teach that fairy boy a lesson.

ID: Xesh



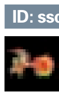
It has to be *A Link To The Past*. It's the only one that I still return to even now. *Ocarina* was good… but that water temple.

ID: Type2XS



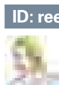
Definitely *A Link to the Past*. None of the 3D *Zelda*s got me into their game world like this one.

ID: sscott



Ocarina Of Time, although I still fell shame in buying a guide book to get past the Water Temple.

ID: reech



My favourite *Zelda* game is the first one. Finding all the Triforce that was scattered around Hyrule was heaps of fun. I can still remember the melody that the flute made when you used it.

ID: Sherringford Hovis



I purchased *Ocarina of Time* for my N64 way back but my flat mate (a games designer) decided to play it all the way through for 'research' whilst I sat back helplessly and watched... and watched... and then tried to kill him in subtle ways. Kind of put me off them...

ID: ToxieDogg



Best *Zelda* game is *Majora's Mask*. I loved the *Groundhog Day*-style dark storyline and transformations into other characters. Despite only having four 'main' dungeons, it was a much bigger game than it first appeared to be as well.



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THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



GET A GRIP

Dear Retro Gamer,
I am in a bit of a gaming pickle and wondered if you could help me out. I own a laptop and many retro gaming compilations, but my problem is that I can't seem to track down an old-fashioned, arcade-style controller, with a stick and six big buttons.

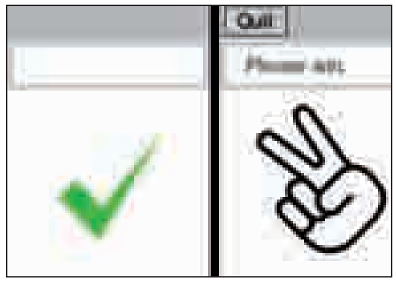
While this in itself doesn't completely ruin the games, and I have a game pad that plugs into the USB port, I think a more arcade-feeling controller would make for a much more authentic experience.

With the help of the Virtual Console and Xbox Live service – both of which have arcade-style controllers available – Retro gaming has become more mainstream in recent years, which is why I find it strange that there is no laptop equivalent. Any help in this matter would be extremely helpful.

Thanks and keep up the good work.

Chris Thorpe, Doncaster

Hi Chris
In the **Retro Gamer** *office we suffer from the exact same problem. We tend to use a Saturn pad to play our entire shoot-'em-up collection, PSone pads for beat-'em-ups, and a GX400 pad for our racing games. Seriously though, if you're after a real arcade experience, then perhaps you should look at investing/building a MAME cab. Although it's a pricey solution, you'll probably find old school friends mysteriously getting back in touch with you, and you can't really beat it for the arcade-in-the-home experience. Here's a picture of Darran's MAME cab, although it's broken at the moment… hence the black screen.*



» "Scissors. No. Paper. Argh! Stone. Phew."

GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE

Dear Retro Gamer,
I live in the US and go out of my way to find your mag, and when I do, it costs me nearly $20. And what do I get for my efforts? Top 25 Spectrum games, a making of *Manic Miner*, an interview with Matthew Smith, and a retroinspection of, you guessed it, the Spectrum. Maybe next time you can expand past one format? Oh, and you should send the binder to me just because I spend so much money on the magazine.

Andres

The binder's in the post, mate. (It isn't really).

WILLY OR DIDN'T WE?

Dear Retro Gamer,
I've just been reading page 16 in Load 48 of **Retro Gamer** and I have to ask: what is Miner Willy doing outside a house on Montague Street in that picture of Trashman? Is it a 'spot the miner' competition? I've had a quick browse through and can't see Willy hidden in any other screenshots.

Top-notch magazine this month, I just can't get enough of those Spectrum articles. I must ask though, did you deliberately wait until Load 48(K) before doing a Spectrum special, or is that a very happy coincidence?

Steve Ackerley



Hey Steve,
Unfortunately, it was just a very lucky coincidence that our big Spectrum issue fell on issue 48 of **Retro Gamer**. *We're not actually that clever you see – Darran's* Brain Training *age is in the sixties while Stuart's is in the region of 35. Anyway, with regard to hidden Willies in the magzine, the last and only time we've pulled a lame stunt like that was in Load 26 (the one with Sonic on the cover), in which we thought it would be highly hilarious to hide a number of tiny images of Sonics throughout the mag. Steve, we're not sure how Miner Willy found his way into Trashman, perhaps he was walking off the effects of yet another alcohol-fuelled house party.*

GREAT GIANA SISTERS

Dear Retro Gamer,
First, I would like to say that this magazine is fantastic and you're all doing a great job. I own all 49 so far. Nothing has even come close to this since the great days of *ZZAP 64!*, which my best mate and I used to buy every single month without fail to see all the latest reviews. It seems such a distant memory since the hot summers of the Eighties sitting on my doorstep drinking Lucozade relishing in the excitement of what we needed to buy next.

Only now is that excitement back – and it's all thanks to you guy's (although I don't sit on my doorstep with my mate any more). This brings me on to your recent feature on *The Great Giana Sisters*, which was an amazing game. The graphics and sound were excellent and the gameplay was out of this world. It's hard to find games with all of those elements these days. And yes, I know it was removed from the shelves due to copyright, but I'm one of the lucky few who own a mint condition of this on the 64. Any buyers?

I would also like to say a big thank you, and keep up all your great work.

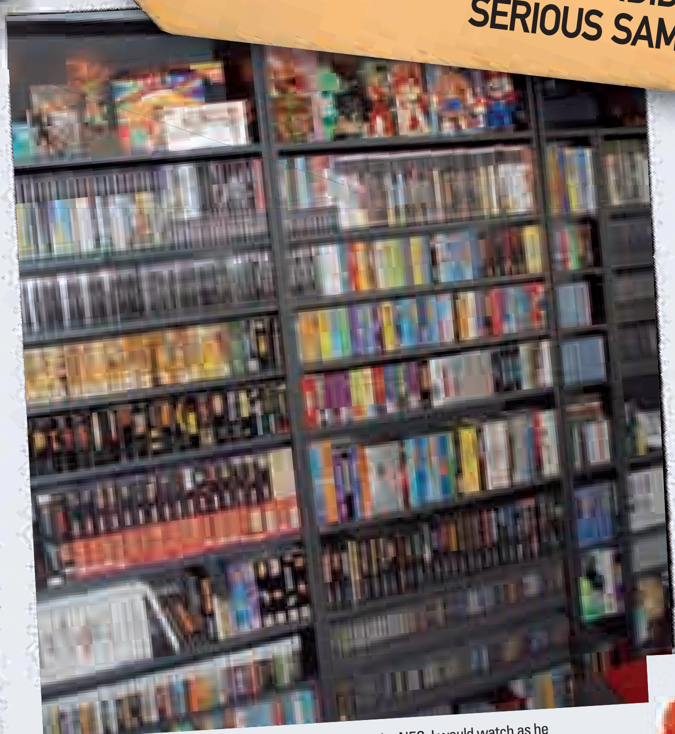
Kind regards,

Gary Cole, Dartford

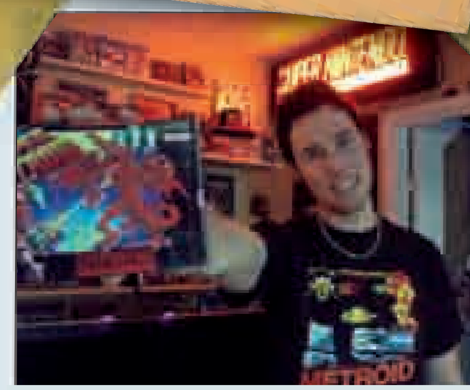
Cheers Gary, it puts a huge smile on our faces when we receive a letter like yours. We have a great deal of admiration for those classic magazines of old – and we consider it a huge compliment to be held up against them. We're really lucky to have such a great team of writers and readers. It really is a team effort that has kept **Retro Gamer** *going for so long, so make sure you give yourself a pat on the back.*

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR GAMERS WITH UNUSUAL COLLECTIONS, SO DAVID BOSTRÖM, A 25-YEAR OLD SWEDE, PROVED TO BE THE PERFECT CANDIDATE. NOW THERE'S SOME SERIOUS SAMUS LOVE COMING UP

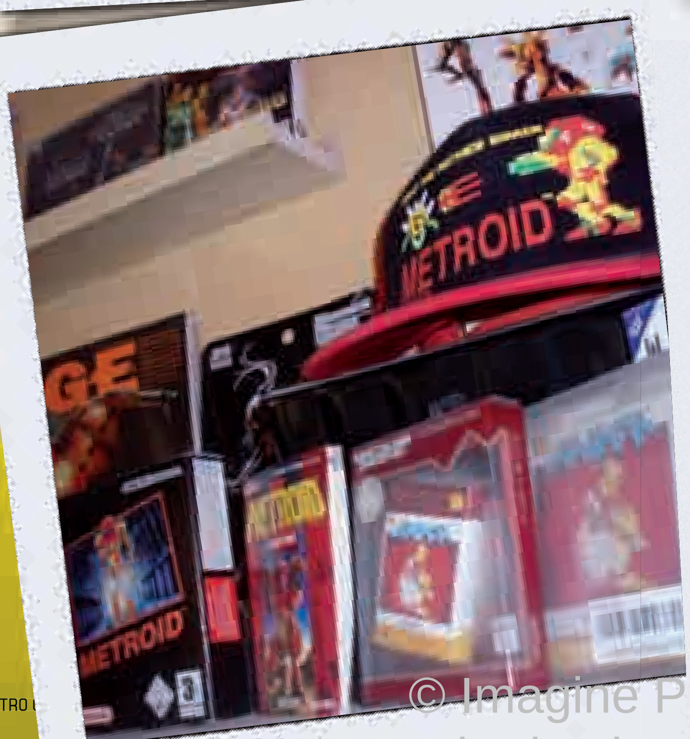


» I played the very first *Metroid* game with my father on the NES. I would watch as he played and I remember being really scared when he finally destroyed the motherbrain. We thought that the boss fight was so cool we recorded it.



» I have always loved the *Metroid* games – the music, the graphics, its atmosphere – but my favourite is easily *Super Metroid*. I play it several times every year, and it really is the best game in the world. My collection began when I started collecting everything related to the *Metroid* franchise, and it just keeps getting bigger.







» I collect every magazine that has *Metroid* on the cover. I also like to collect all kinds of *Metroid* guides and I am hopeful that **Retro Gamer** will have its very own *Metroid* cover very soon.







» My prized *Metroid* collection. It just keeps on growing. It now takes up 11 shelves.



» This Samus figure was only recently released and cost around $130. The price is steep but only 2,500 copies have been made by First4Figures. By the way, I bought three of them.



» This is the *Metroid* PCB display sign from the arcades. I bought it on eBay from a seller who had two of them. Of course I bought them both, but after I had won both auctions I got an angry email from another bidder who was really mad at me because I had bought both. That was kind of funny.





» Here in this locker I keep some of the smaller items, such as enamel pins, stickers, *Metroid* glasses, postcard, and even laser pointers.

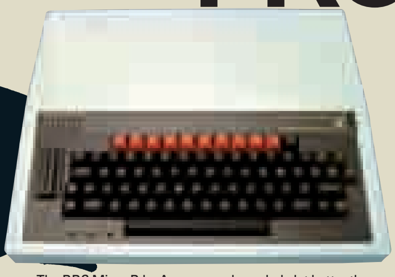
If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about then contact us at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

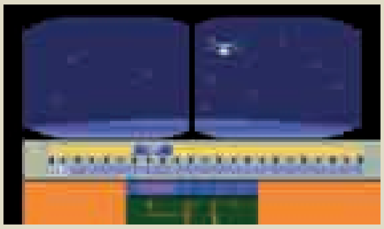
THE LATEST NEWS FROM JULY 1984



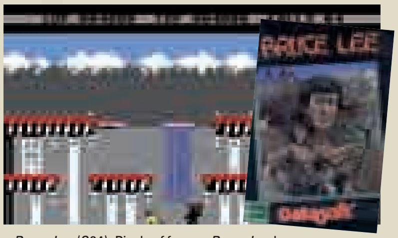
July 1984 – Imagine Software liquidated, Finchspeed created, Atari splits, and Tramiel buys, a mole is discovered at Gremlin, Crowther gets the bird, and Mugsy arrives from Melbourne. Ricardo Burtolini makes you an offer you can't refuse…



» The BBC Micro B by Acorn sounds a whole lot better than the BBC ZX Micro by Sinclair don't you think?



» *Space Shuttle* (Atari 2600): You see that windmill in space? That's a stray satellite and that's your mission.



» *Bruce Lee* (C64): Pixels of fury as *Bruce Lee* becomes extremely popular on 8-bit systems across the nation.

Imagine Software, the grandiose software house with a penchant for fast cars, finally succumbed to its increasing debts. However, there was more to the company than just high expenditure and low income with internal wrangling between co-directors, Ian Hetherington and Dave Lawson, and general manager Bruce Everiss.

The death throes for one of the UK's most productive software houses began on 29 June when Everiss abruptly resigned. The crux of the managerial split was that Hetherington and Lawson had set up a new company called Finchspeed, which, they stated, was formed as a way of raising funds for Imagine so it could pay off some of the existing debt.

However, on 1 July an Extraordinary General Meeting of Imagine shareholders saw an agreement reached that gave Finchspeed the copyright to the MegaGames, *Psyclapse* and *Bandersnatch*. Finchspeed would also get the use of the existing Imagine premises, take over all of Imagine's assets and employ 20 former Imagine staff members. Imagine, in return, would receive 50% of any profit from MegaGames sales and several thousand pounds for its computer equipment.

Everiss claimed that: "They have set up Finchspeed in order to own Imagine's MegaGames and assets for themselves." It certainly seemed like a great deal.



» No money, huge debts, no MegaGames, and still Imagine Software managed to get full-page adverts in the computing press in July.

On 2 July Imagine was in court to hear that it had to pay £10,000 to one of its creditors. To raise funds, Imagine sold over a hundred thousand games from its warehouse stock to a wholesaler for 30 pence per unit. By 9 July Imagine was officially wound up and the receivers called in after it failed to pay the £10,000 debt. Quite where the money from the warehouse sell-off went no one seemed to know.

On the same day in the US of A, Jack Tramiel and his company, Tramel Technologies Ltd, bought the video and computer games divisions of Atari from Warner Communications for a reported $240 million and promptly renamed it the Atari Corporation. The arcade division of the company remained with Warner and was renamed Atari Games Inc.

Tramiel, the founder and former president of Commodore, immediately began laying off staff at its HQ in Sunnyvale in an attempt to cut costs and streamline the company due to an alarming collapse in sales of videogames and home computers, which triggered Warner to sell off its Atari divisions in the first place.

There was good news for Acorn and the BBC as they extended their partnership with a new four-year contract. Several other companies had been toying with the idea of capturing the contract from Acorn, with Sinclair the primary challenger to its position. However, for a second time Sinclair was overlooked in favour of a contract renewal.

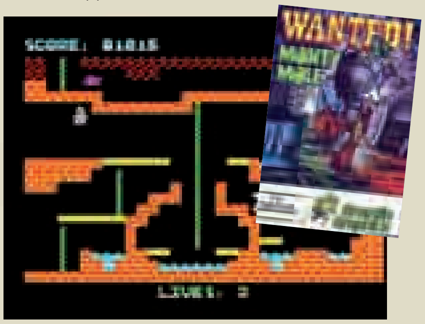
Another new software house had sprung up and persuaded Tony Crowther, programmer of games such as *Gryphon* (Quicksilva) and *Son Of Blagger* (Alligata), to jump on board. The new company, Gremlin Graphics, released its first game by Crowther, *Percy The Potty Pigeon* on Commodore 64 within the month.

Also ready for release was Gremlin's first videogame for a new recurring character that the company hoped to use for an ongoing series of games. Thanks to the talented fingertips of Peter Harrap, *Wanted: Monty Mole* had arrived.

Melbourne House unveiled its latest offering *Mugsy* on the Spectrum. The gangster-based strategy game, advertised as an interactive video comic strip, certainly impressed graphically, almost to the point where it appeared it was more a showcase



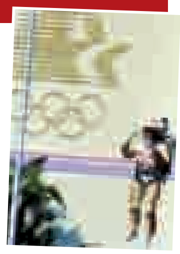
» *Mugsy* (Spectrum): Although you only pressed a few numbers and shot the occasional hitman it was still strangely fascinating.



» *Wanted!: Monty Mole* (Spectrum): The first of the *Monty* series starts with Gremlin's debut game release on the Spectrum.

1984

JULY NEWS

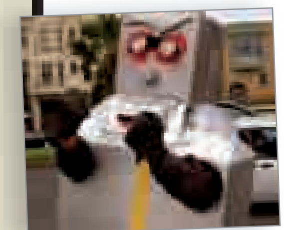


» In the future, we will all travel to work like this. We just wish it had a longer flight time than 20 seconds…

On 9 July York Minster medieval cathedral caught fire after a lightning strike. The south transept was badly damaged and the roof was completely destroyed by the flames. They were rebuilt in four years, along with the famous rose window, which had also sustained damage, at a cost of £2.25 million.

The first reported case of a robot killing a human was documented on 21 July. It occurred in America while a worker was operating an automated die-casting system in conjunction with an industrial robot. The man was found trapped between the back of the robot and a large steel safety pole that was positioned to restrict robot arm movement. It appeared the robot had stalled, pinning the worker against the pole while applying constant pressure to his chest, resulting in a heart attack.

The 23rd summer Olympics, held in Los Angeles, opened on 29 July with one of the most memorable sights of any Olympiad, the iconic jet-pack moment. The Rocketbelt was the same as that used in the James Bond movie *Thunderball*. An updated lightweight version is now available to buy off-the-peg with a full training package for just $125,000.



» "Come on then. I'll punch your bloody face in if you come near me with that screwdriver." Robot rage. Marvellous.



» *Frak!* (BBC): This game was responsible for thousands of lost hours of work time at primary school. Fraktastic stuff.

for what Melbourne Draw could produce, rather than being a gripping strategy game.

Datasoft and US Gold also had two new games ready to ship. The first was a graphic adventure based on the television series *Dallas*. *The Dallas Quest* was released on C64 and was in fact reasonably good.

The second game turned out to be a retro-gaming classic. *Bruce Lee*, a platform/fighting game, was superb. Although it was relatively easy to complete, it still managed to grab you by the nunchuks and demand you clock it again and again. Fantastic on C64, the later conversions on Spectrum and Amstrad turned out to be just as playable.



» *Moon Alert* (Spectrum): Shoot invaders, jump holes, shoot rocks, jump more holes. A solid title on a tried-and-tested format.

Amstrad owners were pleased to hear the news that a new official CPC-dedicated magazine would be available from next month. However, the bi-monthly *CPC464 User*, produced by Amstrad and Amsoft, would only be available through joining the Amstrad User Club for £19.95. Thankfully, that would change by issue three when popularity led it to appear on general sale.

Crash magazine dipped into its Smash stash and awarded top honours in its reviews section to *Worse Things Happen At Sea* (Silversoft), *Moon Alert* (Ocean) and *Sabre Wulf* (Ultimate). Curiously, *Crash* didn't give any percentage scores for *Sabre Wulf*, preferring to rate it as… 'unrateable'. Not far off the pace was *Antics* (Bug-Byte) and *Stop The Express* (Sinclair).

Big K awarded its maximum KKK rating (nothing to do with white hoods…) to *Ghouls* (Micropower, BBC), *Jet Set Willy* (Software Projects, Spectrum) and *Space Shuttle* (Activision, Atari 2600). Nods of appreciation went to *Jet Power Jack* (Micropower, BBC), *Cyclon Attack* (A&F Software, BBC) and *Flying Feathers* (Bubble Bus, C64).

C&VG plumped for *Frak!* (Aardvark, BBC) for its Game of the Month award. *Codename Mat* (Micromega, Spectrum), *One On One* (Electronic Arts, C64), *Guardian* (Alligata, Electron) and *Mugsy* (Melbourne House, Spectrum) were the best of the rest.

Also new out this month and receiving glowing reviews was a little arcade title called *Bomb Jack*. Nice!

THIS MONTH IN...

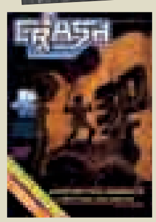
BIG K



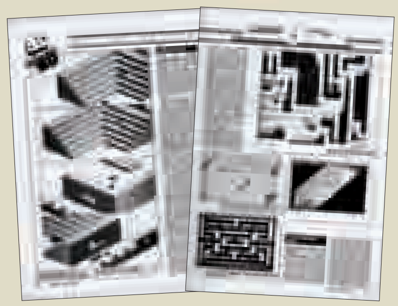
Issue 4 of Big K visited Liverpool to talk to the big three software houses on the Mersey; Bug-Byte, Software Projects, and the freshly liquidated Imagine Software. What seemed to come through strongly in the interviews was the animosity between Bug-Byte and Software Projects regarding Matthew Smith's departure.



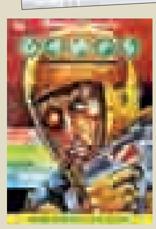
CRASH



A big feature on 3D and perspective in videogames looked at those titles in which the perspective plays a part in the game rather than being a gimmicky selling point. Among the good were *Ant Attack* and *Android 2* with *Pedro* and *Haunted Hedges* among the not so impressive.



PERSONAL COMPUTER GAMES



One article asked prominent programmers to name their favourite games. Kevin Toms went for *Arcadia*, Jeff Minter said *Star Raiders* on Atari, John Gibson liked *M.U.L.E.*, Nick Alderton voted for *Manic Miner*, while Sandy White chose *Attack Of The Mutant Camels*.



CHARTS

JULY 1984



MUSIC

1 Two Tribes (Frankie Goes To Hollywood)
2 Relax (Frankie Goes To Hollywood)
3 Time After Time (Cyndi Lauper)
4 I Won't Let The Sun Go Down On Me (Nik Kershaw)
5 Hole In My Shoe (Neil)

SPECTRUM



1 Jet Set Willy (Software Projects)
2 Fighter Pilot (Digital Integration)
3 Codename Mat (Micromega
4 Manic Miner (Software Projects)
5 Atic Atac (Ultimate)

COMMODORE 64



1 Hunchback (Ocean)
2 Manic Miner (Software Projects)
3 Space Pilot (Anirog)
4 Blagger (Alligata)
5 Son Of Blagger (Alligata)

BBC

1 Chuckie Egg (A&F Software)
2 Aviator (Acornsoft)
3 Fortress (Pace Software)
4 Cyclon Attack (A&F Software)
5 Twin Kingdom Valley (Bug Byte)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1990





October 1990 – Super Famicom is almost here, Lucasfilm does a Late Shift, 16-bit budget battles kick off, James Pond avoids being fish-fingered, and dodgy spongy thumbness occurs. Richard Burton proceeds to Monkey Island to escape the evil Thumb Master…

The news that gamers had been waiting for, the official worldwide launch date of the Super Famicom console, was announced. Nintendo revealed that it would be available in Japan from 21 November at around ¥25,000 (about £100). It would come complete with one in-pack game, the splendid *Super Mario World*.

The grey market for machines would no doubt prosper from importing them to the UK. However, the incentive to buy was there because the UK version, the Super Nintendo, would be the best part of 18 months away from official release.

Lucasfilm Games revealed it was putting the finishing touches to its new arcade adventure, *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. Touted as a complex menu-driven adventure with a general garnish of comedic dialogue, it would introduce gamers to the character of Guybrush Threepwood the wannabe pirate. He must rescue Elaine Marley from the clutches of ghost pirate LeChuck and ultimately prevent them from marrying.

The Secret Of Monkey Island would get an initial release on PC, Apple Mac, and Atari ST with the Amiga following a while later. Lucasfilm also had a follow-up to its very successful simulation *Their Finest Hour* ready for release. *The Secrets Weapons Of The Luftwaffe* would be available on PC with Amiga and ST releases to follow.

Lucasfilm still had one further title in development, *Night Shift*. Set in a toy factory called Industrial Might & Logic (see what they did there), you must keep The Beast, the machine that makes the dolls, well oiled and maintained. A nice touch was that all of the dolls produced were based on characters in Lucas's world, such as ET, Indiana Jones, Jaws, and Darth Vader. A late November release was anticipated on Amiga and ST.

US Gold was looking to keep *Strider* fans happy with news that it would be producing *Strider II* with Tiertex, the original developer, once again doing the donkey work. It would be available on a host of systems including Master System, Amstrad, and Amiga.

Another licensing coup for US Gold was the rights to the forthcoming third instalment of the *Godfather* trilogy. Both game and movie were expected to be released around March 1991.

The most pointless console invention arrived this month with the introduction of the Thumb Master, new from American company Bachiero Creations. It's a neoprene thumb cover to stop soreness during prolonged gaming sessions. Was it any good? Not even in the slightest.

According to the computing press, the once-behemoth-like Activision UK appeared to have fallen upon hard times. It announced this month that it was ceasing game development for many computer systems including Spectrum and Amiga while spending more time becoming a distributor for Nintendo.

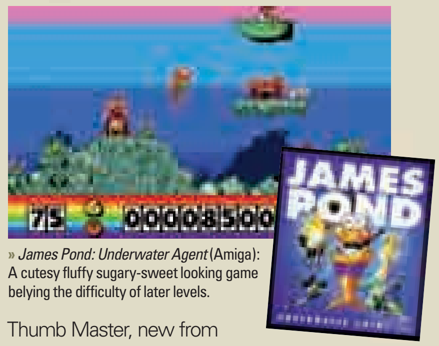
Let budget battle commence With 8-bit budget re-releases outselling most of the new releases, the software-house big boys had decided it was time to test the 16-bit gaming waters with a major swing toward a bargain-bin pricing strategy.

Virgin Mastertronic was aiming to release a large selection of games on its 16 Blitz label, including the newly acquired back catalogue of adventure-producing company Infocom. Among the first of these re-releases was *The Leather Goddesses Of Phobos*, *Zork 1*, and *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*.

New to the budget market but keen to make up for lost time, was Ocean with its Hit



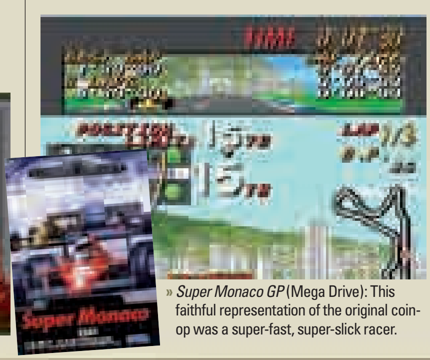
» Please be upstanding for the most pointless and completely unnecessary games-related invention since Lenslok.



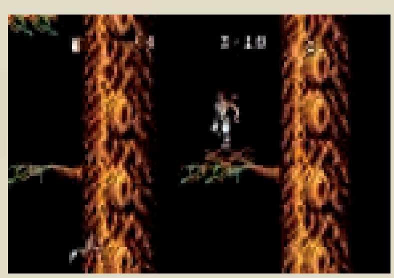
» *James Pond: Underwater Agent* (Amiga): A cutesy fluffy sugary-sweet looking game belying the difficulty of later levels.



» *Splatterhouse* (PC-Engine): A classic whack and splat-'em-up. Take a trip to West Mansion and spread some innards.



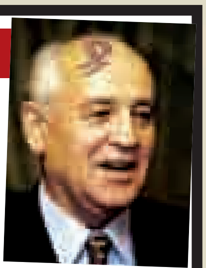
» *Super Monaco GP* (Mega Drive): This faithful representation of the original coin-op was a super-fast, super-slick racer.



» *Strider II* (Master System): Battle your way through five levels of varied terrain to save the leader of the planet Magenta.

1990

OCTOBER NEWS



» The former Soviet leader embraces Western ways by copyrighting the birthmark on his slaphead.

30 October saw the first completed stage of the Channel Tunnel linking France and England. The two ends of a small service tunnel met 40 metres under the English Channel. The 31-mile-long tunnel was dug with the aid of laser guidance, and when the two ends met they were just 36 centimetres out. It was the first time in 8,500 years – due to the Ice Age – that you could walk from England to mainland Europe.

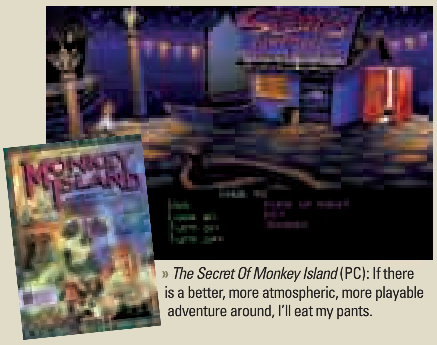
On 3 October the world witnessed the unification of East and West Germany. East Germany merged its five newly formed states into the country and the new unified Germany was born. With it came economic problems and high unemployment on the former East-German side. The estimated cost of the unification process totalled 1.5 trillion euros.

15 October saw Mikhail Gorbachev awarded the Nobel Peace Price for his efforts in ending the Cold War. His Sinatra Doctrine, allowing Eastern Bloc countries to do things 'their way', led to democratic reforms and contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Mildly interesting fact: Gorbachev had his famous port-stain forehead birthmark trademarked in 2004.



» Something told British Eurotunnel bosses that the French weren't taking this Channel Tunnel business seriously.



» *The Secret Of Monkey Island* (PC): If there is a better, more atmospheric, more playable adventure around, I'll eat my pants.



» *Wizball* (Amiga): Re-released on The Hit Squad budget label, the Amiga version was less impressive than the original Commodore 64 release.

Squad label, which had done tremendously well on the 8-bit formats. With an opening salvo of releases, such as *Wizball*, *R-Type*, *Nebulus*, *Operation Wolf*, and *Super Hang-On*, much would depend on their as-yet-undecided pricing structure.

New budget novices were Digital Integration, who would be re-releasing several of its older full-price games at the much more likeable price of £4.99. Among its first wave of releases would be *On Safari* and *Fast Lane*.

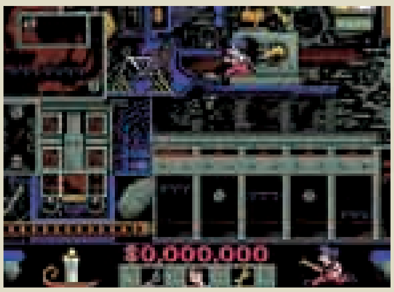
If you like your platform games to be colourful and cutesy with a large blob of playability splattered on the top, then Millennium had the very game for you. Although it was still under development, *James Pond: Underwater Agent* was shaping up to be a refreshingly quirky and, most of all, fun game. *James Pond* proved successful on release and turned out to be the first of many games in a long and, mostly, impressive series. Millennium thought a December release was likely.

With new console and 16-bit magazines launching on a regular basis, such as *Raze* and *Mean Machines*, there was bound to be a few 8-bit magazine casualties along the way. Database Publication's *Electron User*, one of the longer running 8-bit magazines, sadly ended after an 83-issue stretch.

CV&G slapped its stamp of approval on *Pang* (Ocean, Amiga), *Ivan Stewart's Off Road Racing* (Virgin, Amiga), *Cadaver* (Imageworks, Atari ST), *Captive* (Mindscape, Amiga), *Rick Dangerous 2* (Microstyle, Atari ST), *Wings* (Mirrorsoft/Cinemaware, Amiga), *Super Monaco GP* (Sega, Mega Drive), and *Splatterhouse* (Namcot, PC-Engine).

Zero magazine deemed the following worthy of Zero Hero status; *Wonderland* (Magnetic Scrolls, Amiga/ST), *Battle Command* (Ocean, Amiga), *Cadaver* (Imagworks, Atari ST), and *Delphine* (US Gold, PC).

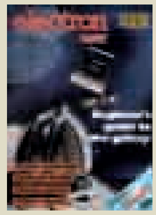
Multiformat magazine *ACE* decided *Captive* (Mindscape, Amiga), Vaxine (US Gold, Atari ST), *Project Stealth* (Delphine, Amiga), Simulcra (Microstyle, Atari ST), *Silent Service II* (Microprose, PC) should all be ACE Rated.



» *Night Shift* (Amiga): This was a big old quirky puzzle game from Lucasfilm that just didn't quite hit the mark.

THIS MONTH IN...

ELECTRON USER



This was the last edition of the magazine, and the top-rated game this issue, winning the Golden Game award, was *Helter Skelter* by Audiogenic. The magazine also featured a retrospective, Time Warp, which looked back at a past year of *Electron User*. Man, that sort of feature will never catch on…



THE ONE



Celebrating its second birthday, *The One* ran the rule over its previous two years' worth of issues. Also included were the highs and lows of the year from the programming elite of the time. The lowlight for **RG** favourite Archer MacLean was injuring himself snowboarding.



ZERO



The Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles were everywhere. There were films, action figures, cartoons, they were on the NES, and now they even show up on the cover of *Zero*. Inside was a two-page feature on the making of the ST and Amiga versions of the computer game released by Mirrorsoft. Cowabunga, dude! Well… quite…



CHARTS

OCTOBER 1990



AMIGA

1. Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles (Mirrorsoft)
2. Shadow Warriors (Ocean)
3. Lost Patrol (Ocean)
4. Kick Off 2 (Anco)
5. Red Storm Rising (Microprose)



ATARI ST

1. F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
2. Kick Off 2 (Anco)
3. F-29 Retaliator (Ocean)
4. Sim City (Infogrames)
5. Damocles (Novagen)

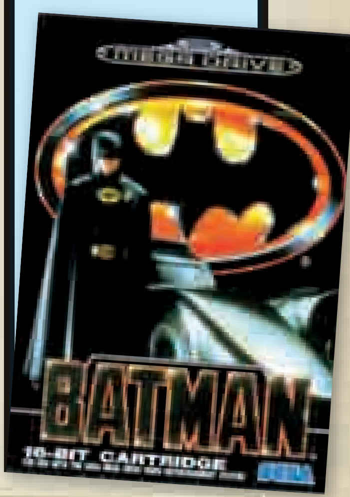


PC

1. PGA Tour Golf (Electronic Arts)
2. Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
3. Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Gold (Accolade)
4. Ultima VI (Origin)
5. Secret Of The Silver Blade (SSI)

SEGA MEGA DRIVE

1. Batman (Sega)
2. Super Monaco GP (Sega)
3. ESWAT: City Under Siege (Sega)
4. Phelios (Sega/Namco)
5. Cyberball (Sega)



ASSASSIN

NO WONDER DARRAN LIKES IT...



- » **PUBLISHER:** TEAM 17
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ACTION
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** AMIGA
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



HISTORY

Oh, come on, how were we not going to cover this particular little gem? Team 17 has always been adept at taking a particular game or genre and putting its own unique spin on it, so perhaps it should have come as no surprise that *Assassin* turned out to be the Amiga publisher's very own answer to Capcom's wonderful *Strider*, which had hit the Amiga in 1989.

The main character looked the same, he even wore a similar colour outfit, he was just as athletic, he'd hang from ceilings, climb up walls, and he even shared the same girlfriend. Okay, so we might have made that last bit up.

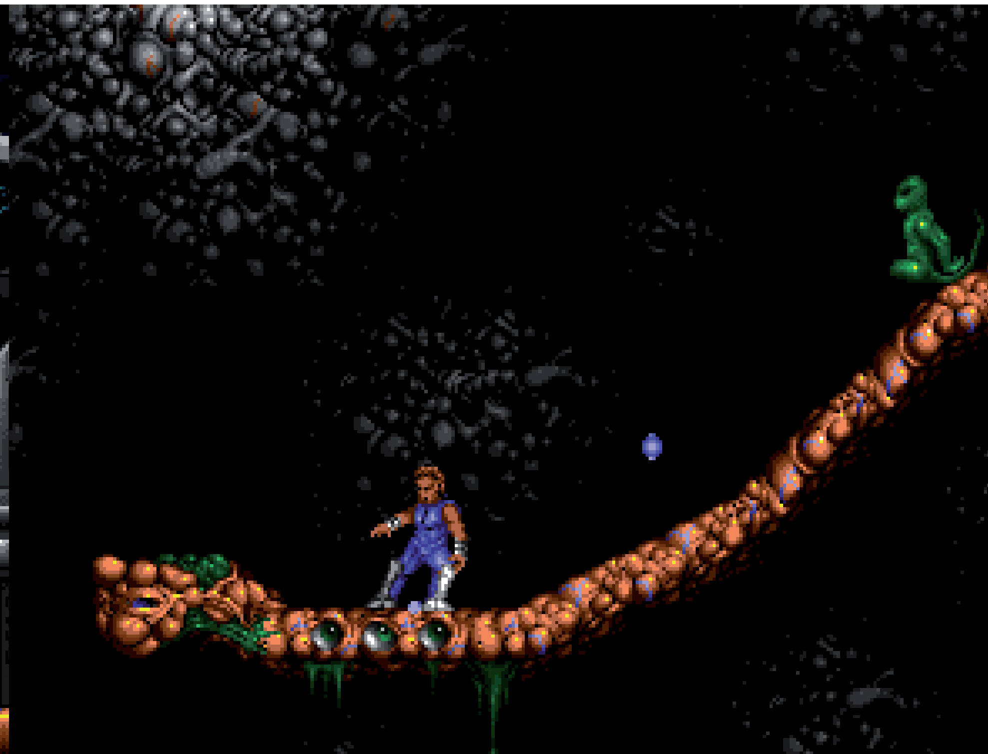
Still, while many Amiga reviews stated it was better than Capcom's effort – it so wasn't – it nevertheless proved to be a perfectly acceptable game, and it continued to highlight the sheen and slickness that Team 17 was so famous for. As with many Amiga games of the time, it felt very 'consoley' (no bad thing) and it was obvious that developer Psionic Systems had definitely been looking eastwards for its initial inspiration.

Another aspect *Assassin* shared with *Strider* was that it was one exceptional looking game, and while it couldn't quite reach the majestic inventiveness and sheer vividness of its elder peer, it nevertheless stood proudly in a sea of similar Amiga games. Indeed, with its huge end-of-level bosses, super slick animation, solid level design and a scorching soundtrack by Allister Brimble, it's little wonder that many journalists fell in love with it.

Assassin may have been all style and no substance, but when you're leaping and bounding across its many glorious looking screens, your boomerang mercilessly picking off enemies, you simply didn't care. *Assassin* placed you in the able shoes of a merciless and athletic antihero and allowed you to run wild through a stunning looking world, and let's face it, how many other Amiga games allowed you to do that? Oh and you can't say *Assassin: Special Edition.*

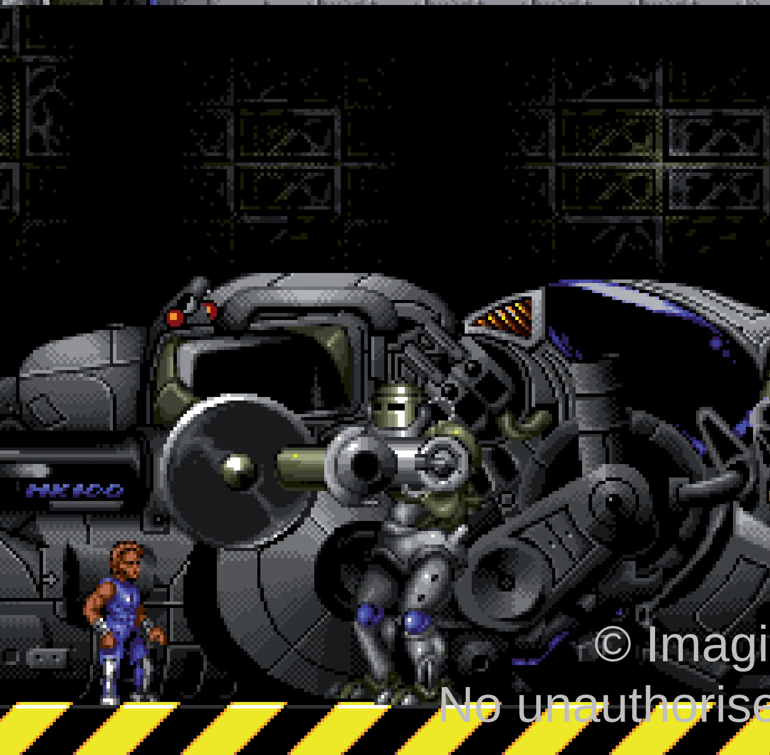













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THE HISTORY OF ZELDA

DONKEY KONG MAY WELL HAVE BEEN NINTENDO'S MOST IMPORTANT CREATION BUT THERE'S ANOTHER THAT WAS THE REAL DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE COMPANY'S SUCCESS; A GAME THAT THE BIG APE HELPED TO STUMP UP THE CASH FOR. JOIN STUART HUNT AS HE WHIPS OUT HIS OCARINA AND BANGS OUT A LENGTHY TUNE



Since his videogame debut in 1985 (save for the Virtual Boy), Link has always worked his little elfin boots off to ignite interest into every single piece of Nintendo hardware to ever find a release… and even some of the weird and wonderful contraptions that never left his native Japan. Even through that dark GameCube period, where seemingly infallible Nintendo IPs were somehow failing to capture that Nintendo magic, there was one licence that has always looked after its Nintendo Seal of Quality. It's apt then that *Zelda* would become the final resting place for the GameCube, and the first licence that Nintendo would turn to as a 'proper' launch title for its much-hyped Wii.

Before Hyrule, videogames were usually single-screen worlds filled with bleeping and chirping sprites, where progression and skill was distinguished by stamping three letters into a list. And before *The Legend Of Zelda*, game narratives were generally spared a measly paragraph on an arcade cab or a few dubiously spelt words on a menu screen, and rules and stories would generally play out via easily digestible visuals and an ounce of common sense – escape the ghosts, shoot the crab-looking invader, avoid those asteroids.

Off the back of the unprecedented arcade success of *Donkey Kong*, Nintendo would be able to finance three pivotal projects that would transform it from a Hanafuda card manufacturer dabbling in the world of electronic entertainment, to a leading player in that very market almost overnight: the Famicom, *Super Mario Bros* and *The Legend Of Zelda*.

Zelda's development would begin at around the same time as *Super Mario Bros*, with Shigeru Miyamoto splitting his time between his divided development team and overseeing both projects. His early intention for *The Legend Of Zelda* was to create a sprawling 'virtual garden'; a videogame set inside a lush world that would grow and unfurl. The thinking, at that time, was that *Super Mario Bros* was going to offer an immediately accessible and technically unique gaming experience, and *The Legend Of Zelda* would offer gamers the freedom to essentially shape their own adventure.

Despite this peculiar juxtaposition of projects inside the camp, *Mario* and *Zelda* would both decide to outmode the element of high-score chasing and instead replace it with the notion of completion – ending the gaming experience and unlocking a reward screen for your troubles. It was a belief that wouldn't hold up inside the money-feeding world of arcade gaming, but one that Miyamoto believed was perfectly viable in the home.

Miyamoto grew up in the small town of Sonebe, in Kyoto, Japan – a picturesque upbringing that would offer the perfect place for his fertile mind to wander. He was a keen artist with an affinity for music, architecture and design; passions that would ultimately lead him onto an academic road in industrial design and as a staff artist for Nintendo. But it was his early fascination for exploration that he would ultimately try to impart to the player through *Zelda*.

His inspiration behind the dungeons – now a staple of the *Zelda* series – came

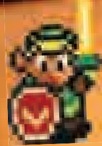




» *Zelda II* is generally regarded as one of the weakest games in the series.



» *The Legend of Zelda* satisfied Miyamoto's love of exploring. It remains a superb NES game.



A Link To The Palm

WE TAKE A TINY LOOK AT ZELDA'S QUITE FANTASTICAL LITTLE HANDHELD HERITAGE

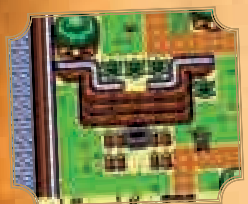


The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening

Released: 1993

System: Game Boy

The first, and what many fans consider the best, portable *Zelda* game. *Link's Awakening* was a dazzling GB follow-up to *A Link To The Past* that would mark the first time that the series would ever play an away game and Zelda and the Triforce would get left on the sub's bench. It's also the first *Zelda* game not to be directed by Shigsy – possibly why it has a lot of *Mario* imagery in it. Link is marooned on the strange island of Koholint, where he learns of the mysterious Wind Fish; a giant guppy that lives inside an egg sitting aloft a volcano. Legend has it that when the fish is awoken he will be mighty peeved and the island will disappear, so Link and an owl set off to find an orchestra of instruments and aim to wake up the slumbering Fish to put the myth to the test.



The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX

Released: 1998

System: Game Boy Color

Adding its name to the Game Boy Color's Deluxe series, *Link's Awakening DX* would be a coloured-in, spruced-up port of the Game Boy original. As well as improving the visuals (which looked pretty fantastic to begin with) Nintendo would also add a few new additions to the game, most notably a new 'Color Dungeon', which made use of colour-based puzzles, and a camera shop and photo album function that made use of the Game Boy Printer.



The Legend Of Zelda: Oracle Of Seasons/Oracle of Ages

Released: 2001

System: Game Boy Color/Game Boy Advance

Released consecutively, *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons* would be the first handheld *Zelda* games not to be developed by Nintendo. Instead, the Capcom/Sega-funded studio Flagship, founded by Capcom stalwart Yoshiki Okamoto, would take hold of the reigns. The *Oracle* series would initially start out as a planned Triforce trilogy; three games that could be played in any order and allow your actions in one game to have an influence on the others. Because of the complexity in achieving this, the idea was later scrapped and the trilogy became a duo. But through use of a password system the influencing elements would remain.





The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past & Four Swords

Released: 2003

System: Game Boy Advance

Marking the start of a series crossover between the GBA and the GameCube, Flagship Studios was at it again with this sublime double-pack that housed a brilliant redux of the SNES classic and a four-player multiplayer add-on in *Four Swords* (the first time the series would introduce multiplayer elements). *Four Swords* allowed two to four players to link up their GBAs, take control of a different coloured Link (red, blue, purple and green) and work together to crack its clever colour-themed puzzles. Adopting *The Wind Waker*'s chipper look, the game would also introduce a new villain in Vaati, who would become an iniquitous mainstay in the *Four Swords* series.



The Legend Of Zelda: The Minish Cap

Released: 2004

System: Game Boy Advance

Just to make things confusing for everyone, *The Minish Cap* marks the final game in Flagship's *Four Swords* trilogy, but is actually said to be the prequel to the first game (*Link's Awakening: Four Swords*) in the series. In terms of narrative – sages being mysteriously transformed into talking caps, Link shrinking in size and then bafflingly transforming into a large sphere – it is all a little bit strange, but it all makes for another quality *Zelda* caper. Graphically, with a closer camera, picking up the brilliant hues and attention to detail packed into the game, *The Minish Cap* is probably the best-looking *Zelda* handheld game to find a release before *Phantom Hourglass*.

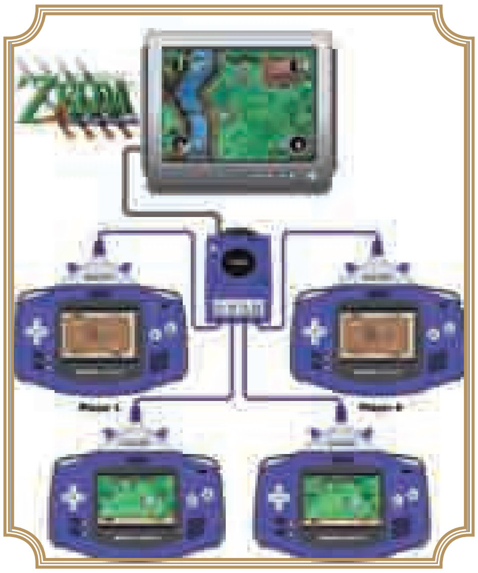


The Legend Of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

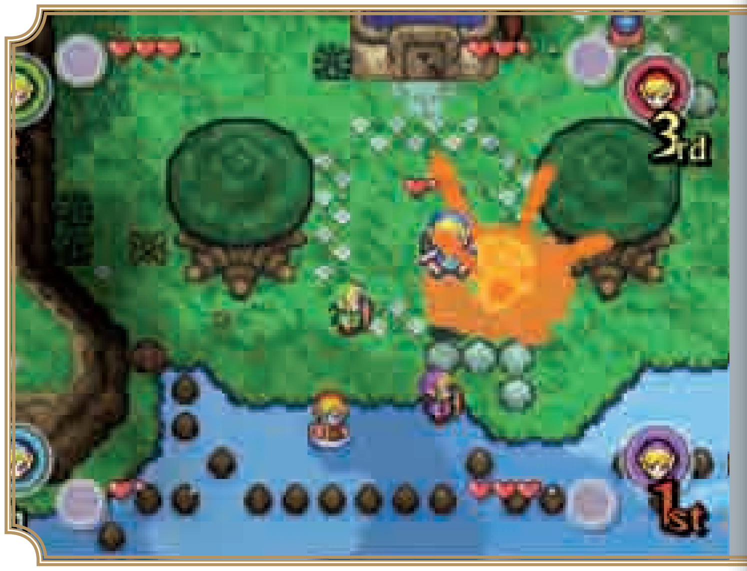
Released: 2007

System: DS

Making inspired use of the Nintendo DS's touch-screen capabilities, *The Legend Of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass* shows us how great a *Zelda* game can be when Nintendo builds it specifically around its hardware (which has us eagerly anticipating whatever it has up its sleeves for the series on the Wii). A direct sequel to *Wind Waker*, seafaring elements would again play a strong role, with the stylus being used to plot your journey and jot down notes and reminders on the game map. Couple this with a brilliant story, lush visuals and quirky puzzles and *Phantom Hourglass* maintains *Zelda*'s impeccable handheld lineage.



» *Four Swords Adventures* on the GameCube allowed four friends to link up their GBAs and tier off to do their own thing.



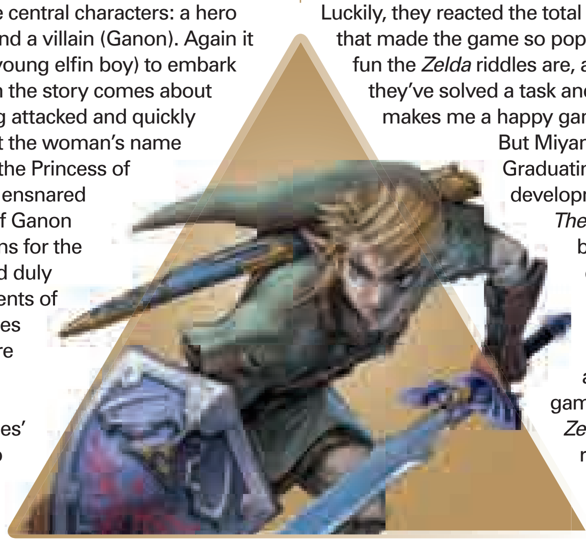
» *Four Swords Adventures* introduced a unique strategy element to the combat of *Zelda*. While teamwork was essential, it soon went to pot once everyone started fighting over rupees.

from the many hours he would spend playing around the rooms of his home as a boy, and the crystal lakes and bountiful greenery of Hyrule from his recollections of exploring the vast fields nearby. Miyamoto's decision to use the name Zelda was inspired by the wife of the American author F Scott Fitzgerald. Famously dubbed "the first American flapper" (the term for a ladette in the Forties), it was her wilful nature that Miyamoto would find so endearing, and persuade him to select her as the muse for the titular princess.

As with *Donkey Kong* and *Super Mario Bros*, Miyamoto would polarise *Zelda*'s story around three central characters: a hero (Link), a damsel (Princess Zelda) and a villain (Ganon). Again it would look to an unusual hero (a young elfin boy) to embark on the quest. Link's involvement in the story comes about after he spots an old woman being attacked and quickly jumps to her aid. He discovers that the woman's name is Impa and that she is a porter to the Princess of Hyrule. He then hears news of the ensnared princess at the nefarious trotters of Ganon and learns of Ganon's evil intentions for the Triforce and the land of Hyrule, and duly agrees to seek out the eight segments of the Triforce of Wisdom and ventures to the top of Death Mountain where Ganon awaits.

In the first game, the Triforce is described as 'three magical triangles' capable of granting great power to their bearer. But its mythology and origins would continue to evolve throughout the series. Essentially, the Triforce is the catalyst, the object of desire that brings and binds the story and characters together. Inside Hyrule there exists three parts to the Triforce: the Triforce of Power that Ganon acquires during his siege on Hyrule castle, the Triforce of Wisdom, which is the part Link is seeking inside the dungeons beneath Hyrule, and the Triforce of Courage, which would first make an appearance in *The Adventure Of Link*.

The Legend Of Zelda was first released in 1986 on the Famicom Disc System, a secondary disk drive that made use of rewritable disks, which never found a release outside of Japan. In the West the game came pressed on majestic gold cartridges that incorporated an internal battery facility to save game data, and it would become the first game cartridge to do this.



Miyamoto's notion to have the game feel completely bilinear was very apparent. Dropped into a huge overhead world, paved with little direction, it would be left to the player to decipher *Zelda*'s modus through consideration and natural exploration alone; a mantra that actually caused a bout of anxiety in the prolific game designer when the game was eventually released.

"I remember that we were very nervous because *The Legend Of Zelda* was our first game that forced players to think about what they should do next," says Miyamoto. "We were afraid that gamers would become bored and stressed by the new concept. Luckily, they reacted the total opposite. It was these elements that made the game so popular and today gamers tell us how fun the *Zelda* riddles are, and how happy they become when they've solved a task and proceeded with the adventure. It makes me a happy game producer!"

But Miyamoto needn't have worried. Graduating with honours alongside its developmental classmate *Super Mario Bros*, *The Legend Of Zelda* would go on to be hugely successful for Nintendo, eventually grossing sales of 6 million copies.

As with *Donkey Kong*, Nintendo was quick to churn out a sequel while the popularity of the game was still piquant. And a year later *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link* was released. Although Miyamoto would oversee the game's development, its creation would fall to a new development team, one who would switch the action from overhead to a side-on perspective and bathe it in subtle *Mario*-esque platform undertones – a change that proved to be unpopular with fans of the original. Its structure would remain generally similar to the first though. It is another 'find several somethings' (nine crystals) to open 'something' (the Great Palace) that holds 'something with wish-granting properties' (the Triforce of Courage) – and this is a structure that has been mirrored for almost every game in the series.

The Adventure Of Link would also introduce a few staples of the RPG genre that would never really take off in the series. Link, for instance, could earn experience points to beef up his attacks, raise his stamina and also obtain magic points to cast spells. However, the game would also introduce village sections, where

The Missing Links

We take a look at some of the Zelda titles that slipped through the release net…

The Legend Of Zelda 64
Nintendo 64DD
Originally said to be a launch title for the 64DD, *The Legend Of Zelda 64* was rumoured to have been a weird coaxial of *Ocarina Of Time* and *Majora's Mask*. Long delays and a lack of confidence in the hardware would force Nintendo to cram the game on to a large N64 cart and release it as *Ocarina Of Time* instead.

Zelda: Gaiden
Nintendo 64DD
Rumoured to be a very early sequel to *Ocarina Of Time* that would make full use of the 64DD's advanced memory system, this 64DD *Zelda* project was again switched to standard N64 carts and would be released as *Majora's Mask*.

Ura Zelda
Nintendo 64DD
Picking up where *Ocarina* left off, this add-on pack originally intended for the 64DD was to chronicle Link's mission to find the Triforce. It would later find a release in the form of the *Master Quest* bonus disc and was released with *The Wind Waker*.

The Legend Of Zelda
Game Boy Color
Said to be developed by Capcom's studio Flagship, it's believed that inside the vaults of Nintendo headquarters lives an extremely sought-after GBC port of the original NES game. If this rumour holds water then it's probably the most valuable videogame in existence.

The Mystical Seed series aka Triforce Trilogy
Game Boy Colour
The two games from the *Oracle* series would originally be intended to be a series of three games called the *Mystical Seed* series. They were to be named after the three seeds of Power, Courage and Wisdom. One game was eventually dropped and Flagship would release them as two games.

Zelda III
NES
Apparently, before releasing *A Link To The Past* on the Super Nintendo it's believed that Nintendo was actually working on another *Zelda* game for the NES that was said to marry elements of the first two games. It's believed that its bones were later used to create *Link's Awakening*.

The many legends of Zelda

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (1986)
The evil pig-faced Ganon has invaded Hyrule Kingdom and kidnapped Princess Zelda. During the siege he steals the Triforce of Power. But it transpires that a cunning Zelda somehow managed to shatter the Triforce of Wisdom and scatter its parts around the dungeons of Hyrule. When Link gets wind of this he vows to collect up the pieces, glue them back together and go and save the princess.

ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK (1987)
Lending quite a bit from *Sleeping Beauty*, Link is trying to wake Princess Zelda from a potent sleeping spell cast on her by a powerful sorcerer. The evil mage is holed up inside the ruins of the Great Palace and has locked the door using magic. It's up to Link to seek out the scattered shards of the Magic Crystal in Hyrule, break the seal, fight a doppelgänger and then restore peace to Hyrule Kingdom.

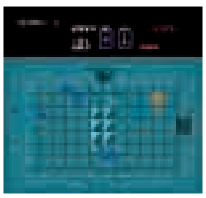
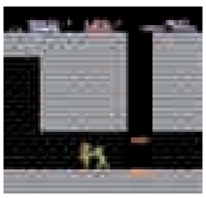
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (1991)
Thanks to an evil sorcerer named Agahnim, Ganon has returned from the darkness again – and this time he has a pitchfork with him! Agahnim has also dethroned the king of Hyrule, kidnapped his daughter Zelda and opened up a portal to the Golden Land that has allowed a whole bunch of evil to flood in and wreak havoc in the once peaceful land of Hyrule.

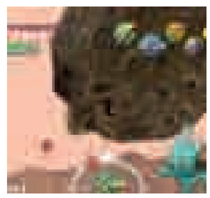
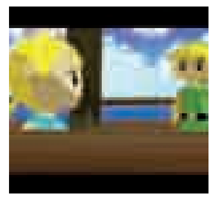
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME (1998)
Ganon's back once again in *Ocarina Of Time*, and this time he's up to his old megalomaniac tricks, so Link's on a mission to banish him to the Dark World forever (well, at least until the next *Zelda* release, that is). To do this Link requires the power of the Seven Sages, and to find them he must travel back in time making changes in one time that will have a knock-on affect on the next.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK (2000)
Link is cast into an alternative world known as Termina (a slightly more chic version of Hyrule). But when he arrives he soon discovers that the world, in three days time, will be levelled to dust by its moon. With just 72 hours on the clock, Link must work fast to locate Majora's Mask and save the world and its people from an imminent moon-crushing.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER (2002)
In *The Wind Waker* Link is on a mission to rescue his sister, who has been abducted and locked up somewhere by a giant bird. Surrounded by miles of water, and using the power of the Wind Waker – which gives Link the power to change the course of the wind – Link must venture out into the Big Blue and travel to different islands to find out who it is that's holding her captive.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS (2006)
When Link and his friends are attacked by a posse of monsters, Link wakes up to find his pals have been kidnapped. Miffed, he sets off to save them, and steps through the Twilight Realm where he's transformed into a wolf and imprisoned. He soon escapes, but learns that evil sorcerer Zant is trying to merge Hyrule with the Twilight Realm… spelling bad news for everyone, except for Zant.




Link would need to gather information from locals, laying down a foundation for the many games that would follow.

In 1990, a new Nintendo console was breaking into the market rapidly. An early and pivotal partnership with Capcom – securing the machine ports of both *Street Fighter II* and *Final Fight* – bolstered by an impressive debut by *Super Mario Bros* would have everyone eagerly anticipating the end of Link's four-year absence from videogames. And Nintendo certainly wouldn't disappoint. Released in 1991, and into a swathe of praise, *A Link To The Past* is cited by many fans as the seminal game in the prolific *Zelda* franchise.



The first two *Zelda* stories were the creations of Miyamoto and fellow game designer Takashi Tezuka. However, for *A Link To The Past*, Miyamoto would enlist the writing talents of producer Kensuke Tanabe. Link's SNES debut would mark a return of the popular overhead look of the first game, as well as introducing some customary tweaks to the visuals and controls. Link could now move diagonally, run (with the aid of Pegasus Boots) and the range of his sword attack was also improved. Perhaps the most notable aspect came from the game's deft use of its items. There was the new Hookshot, which Link could use to stun his enemies and pull himself across large gaps in the ground, the Bow (which made an appearance in the first game but is used to greater effect here) and the Magic Mirror, which Link can use to shift between The Light World: a colourful and lush depiction of Hyrule, and The Dark World: a dank and nightmarish vision painted with skulls, oily looking marshes and menacing-looking trees. The game was packed with a dizzying array of side quests, sub-plots and gameplay.

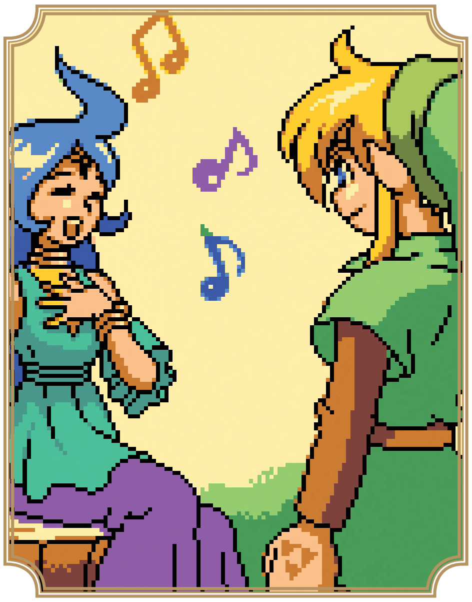
A Link To The Past also marks the first time in the series that the game's three main protagonists: Link, Zelda and Ganon are not the same incarnations seen in the previous games. It's set hundreds of years before the first game – as flipping the back of the box states – our heroes are 'predecessors' to the original Link and Zelda, and this time-fudging has been a running theme throughout the series. The *Zelda* trend seems to be for Nintendo to release a *Zelda* game, set it in its own unique time and then

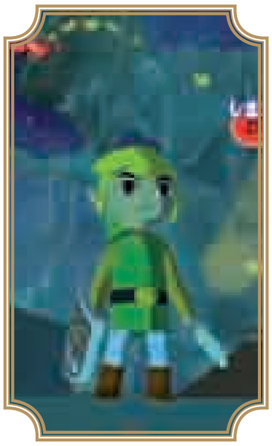
> **"For many fans, the series would never better A Link To The Past"**

follow it up with a quirky direct sequel. *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link*, *Link's Awakening*, *Majora's Mask* and *Phantom Hourglass* are all direct sequels that adhere to this thinking. But for every third game, generally, the player will always be controlling a spiritual descendant of Link inside a game set in its own unique time; *A Link To The Past*, *Ocarina Of Time*, *The Wind Waker* again all back up this belief. It explains why it is that there's this peculiar sense that Nintendo are occasionally rewriting its story, and why characters in certain sequels react and communicate like they're meeting each other for the very first time.

For many, the series would never better *A Link To The Past*. And yet, despite the huge swathe of popularity that the game would glean, the Super Nintendo would receive only one Western *Zelda* game in its lifetime. Nintendo would still cash in on the game's popularity in the East by releasing two *Zelda*-based games on its Satellaview system – a peculiar satellite modem for the SNES co-developed by Nintendo and







» Despite the criticism, we think *The Wind Waker* looks like a Pixar movie.

Bandai. The first game, entitled *BS: The Legend Of Zelda*, was a downloadable four-part episodic remake of the original NES game but with a few subtle differences. First, the graphics and music were given a colourful facelift and a few elements of the gameplay (such as having it play out in real-time, and increasing the capacity of Link's rupee purse) were also tweaked. It's often cited as '*The Third Quest*', because of the way it messed with the dungeons, items and the size ratio of the Overworld.

To cunningly boost awareness of the Satellaview, Nintendo would also opt to supplant the system's two mascots – a boy in a baseball cap and a girl with red hair – in the shoes of protagonists instead of Link. In 1997, Nintendo released a follow-up to the game, *BS The Legend Of Zelda: The Sacred Stones*, which again divided the game into four-weekly downloadable chunks. *Sacred Stones* is considered to be side quest to *A Link To The Past*, owing to the look and feel of the game. It retained the two Satellaview mascots as before, and would set the player on a quest to find eight pieces of hallowed masonry and defeat a resurrected Ganon. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Satellaview games is that, like an interactive television show, they could only be played while the game was being aired. This allowed Nintendo to broadcast hints and tips to the player while they played to help assist them on their quest.

As well as the Satellaview, it was always Nintendo's intention to produce a CD add-on for the Super Nintendo. Sony had developed the sound chip for the SNES (the SPC700) and had experience and grounding in CD technology, therefore, Nintendo's looking to Sony to get the project off the ground was really a case of natural selection. However, as the story goes, Sony was determined to break into the videogame market itself, and had seen an ideal opportunity to do so when that early contract with Nintendo was drawn up. During that deal Nintendo would unknowingly sign an agreement that would give Sony the rights to work on a CD-based console that would run both the planned SNES-CD games and also be backward compatible with SNES carts. In secret, Sony had been working on the console, named the Super Disc, and as that contract would enforce, it would legally play all SNES games. When Nintendo eventually caught wind of this, and realised that Sony would then hold the control, and (it's reputed) profits of all SNES-CD games, it would then side with Sony's rival Philips.

After a messy legal battle, Nintendo successfully found a way to pull out of the contract. But a resolute Sony would simply refine and rework its existing hardware, eventually rolling it out as the Sony PlayStation. After eventually dropping the idea of releasing a CD component for the SNES, Nintendo would give Philips use of two of its IPs for a series of videogames for its CDi machine. Mario and Luigi would cordially appear in the puzzle game *Hotel Mario*, and Link and pals in three interactive movie-games: *Link: The Faces Of Evil*, *Wand of Gamelon*, (released concurrently in 1993), and *Zelda's Adventure* (released a year later). The first two games (*Faces Of Evil* and *Wand of Gamelon*) were side-scrolling action games, à la *The Adventure Of Link*, but spliced up with dated-looking cartoon sequences. For *Zelda's Adventure*, the original top-down approach was adopted but the game filled its boots with poorly rendered CG sprites and astonishingly dire blue-screen acting. Not surprisingly, given the games' prolific heritage, the Philip's games were lambasted by the gaming press and fans of the series.

"Instead of thinking of it as making a game, think of it as nurturing a miniature garden called Hyrule," the words of Miyamoto about the making of *Ocarina Of Time*. It's clear then that for the next *Zelda* game Miyamoto would look back to his original 'virtual garden' concept. But ironically, many fans would view *Ocarina* not as a brilliant nurturing of Hyrule but as a brilliant nurturing of Link. Released in 1998, and built from a drastically modified *Mario 64* engine, *Majora's Mask* chronicled the biggest shift in the series to date, the transition from a 2D to a 3D realm, and a longer period in Link's life. Starting out as a boy, between the age of eight and nine, we would see Link's quest lead him into adulthood. But it's clear what Miyamoto was hinting at. Technically jaw-dropping draw distances, real-time light sourcing and expansive environments that could be covered effortlessly on Link's steed Epona and an almost faultless camera and control system; it's true that the world of Hyrule was never so brilliantly fleshed out.



The Dark, the Pig and the Fabergé egg

HERE'S OUR COMPLETE RUNDOWN OF LINK'S MOST COMMON ADVERSARIES



Dark Link

Appeared as a villain in: *The Adventure Of Link, Ocarina Of Time, Oracle Of Ages, Four Swords Adventures* and *Twilight Princess*.

Dark Link (aka Shadow Link) is an ominous and mysterious villain that makes its first appearance as the final boss in *The Adventure Of Link*. Taking many different guises over the years – he's essentially an evil version of Link draped in darkness with glowing red eyes. Little is known about the origins of Dark Link, but if his appearance in *Ocarina Of Time* is anything to go by, then he seems symbiotic. So, if *Spider-Man 3* was factually accurate, we can assume he's an alien from outer space.



Ganon/Ganondorf Dragmire

Appeared as a villain in: *The Legend Of Zelda, The Adventure Of Link* (Game Over screen), *A Link To The Past, Ocarina Of Time*, the *Oracle* series, *The Wind Waker, Four Swords Adventures* and *Twilight Princess*.

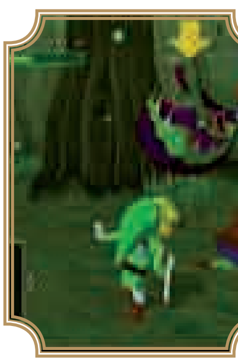
Ganon is Link's first and most prolific adversary. Kicking things off at the end of *The Legend Of Zelda* as a giant pig, he would retain this porky form up until *Ocarina Of Time*, where he would show his true colours: as Ganondorf Dragmire. Ganondorf was the only male born into a guild of women thieves known as the Gerudo clan. Being the only male, he would become the 'King of Thieves' and would lead the Gerudo into taking over Hyrule. Without the power of the Moon Pearl to protect him, the Dark Realm would transform him into a powerful demon who resembles a pig, and he would take vengeance on Hyrule.

Vaati

Appeared as a villain in: *The Minish Cap, Four Swords* and *Four Swords Adventures*.

Vaati is the recurring villain of the *Four Swords* series, who, like Ganon/Ganondorf Dragmire, appears in many different forms. Beginning life as a lowly Minish (a race of fairy-like creatures) he would betray his master, Ezlo, by stealing his power cap and turning himself into a sorcerer. During the *Four Swords* series he can be seen in his original Minish form, his sorcerer shape and also three different variations of his demonic state; which look like a cluster of Fabergé eggs with demonic eyeballs painted on them. Absolutely terrifying.





The sequel to *Ocarina Of Time, Majora's Mask* (2000) introduced many firsts to the series. Originally titled '*Zelda: Gaiden*' in 1999, it was the first time, inside the main canon of games, that Nintendo would really break its Triforce of Character (the first game to do so was *Link's Awakening* on the Game Boy). *Majora's Mask* doesn't include any physical incarnation of Ganon (although his name is mentioned) and Zelda's appearance is relatively brief in relation to the prevailing games in the series. Beginning life as an intended extra-section of *Ocarina Of Time* (had the game been released on the Nintendo 64DD as originally intended), it heavily tweaked at the *Zelda* structure and messed with the series' familiar Hyrulian setting. As a result, many fans viewed it as the most jarring game in the series. The graphic style of *Majora* is essentially *Ocarina* refined, with many of the same elements wholesaled across. The biggest difference between the two N64 games is that in *Majora's Mask* Link doesn't age (although there's a mask in the game that makes it possible) and the whole episode is set over just three videogame days. Link's mission is to prevent the destruction of Termina (a slightly more sophisticated alternative vision of Hyrule) from an ominous moon that in three days will destroy the town. With only three 'days' until the game ends it was necessary for Link to keep travelling back in time, to the start of the first day, until his quest was complete. Oddly, despite the notion of time travel and rebirth being a strong mantra for the *Zelda* series, some would find it difficult to warm to *Majora's* confining time-travel structure, and view it as the most linear game in the series.

If there were some fans that found it difficult to warm to the direction of *Majora's Mask*, then the next *Zelda* game was always destined to put a few noses out of joint. After the infamous *Legend of Zelda: Space World* GameCube demo in 2000, which showed an impressively rendered sword fight between Link and Ganon, its sinewy graphical style of an adult Link had many fans believing they were going to get a darker *Zelda* adventure. However, the game they eventually got would look nothing like the teasing demo unveiled to Space World attendees. Taking the biggest shift in terms of visual style, *The Wind Waker*'s cel-shaded graphics would disgruntle fans who were expecting an epic and mature *Zelda* appendage. Ironically though, perhaps the biggest shift in the game came from its scrapping of certain *Zelda* gameplay elements. Instead of time travel, *The Wind Waker* uses the wind and the ocean for its puzzle and explorative elements, and rather than one large land to explore, it's split into islands connected by miles of sea that Link must traverse by sailboat. But *Wind Waker* also had a sense of humour, and took many aspects from the portable *Zelda* games, with more emphasis on characters and a feeling of being more accessible for newcomers. Its effusive and simple anime-style graphics captured the facial expressions of its characters better than any *Zelda* game before it, going lengths to invoke emotion, a real connection with Link, and cleverly serving as subtle hints to the player to help them solve puzzles. In a bid to perhaps soften that visual blow to its fans, Nintendo would accompany the game with a bonus disc containing the original *Ocarina Of Time* and *Ocarina Of Time/Master Quest* – a more arduous version of the N64 game that was intended to be released for the 64DD.

Perhaps due to its basic look, the next *Zelda* game to appear on the Cube came and went with generally little fanfare.

The A-Z of Zelda

A is for A Link To The Past
Link's seminal *Zelda* adventure and a firm fan favourite

B is for Ballad Of The Wind Fish
The song which Link must play to rouse the Wind Fish.

C is for Crossbow Training
Link's Crossbow Training is a peculiar lightgun spin-off of *Twilight Princess* that comes bundled with the Wii Zapper.

D is for Death Mountain
The home of Link's arch nemesis Ganon.

E is for Epona
The name of Link's noble steed.

F is for Four Swords trilogy
A series of three spin-off *Zelda* games – *A Link To The Past & Four Swords, Four Swords Adventures* and *The Minish Cap* – that are all linked by The Four Sword.

G is for Ganon
Begins life as a pig with a pitchfork, later games would reveal his true form: Ganondorf Dragmire.

H is for Hyrule
The fictional land where the majority of *Zelda* games take place.

I is for Impa
Impa is the caretaker of Princess Zelda, and the old woman that Link saves in *The Legend Of Zelda*.

J is for Jabber Nut
The nut that Link must eat to understand the Minish language.

K is for Koholint
The setting of *Link's Awakening*, marks the first time a *Zelda* game wouldn't be set in Hyrule.

L is for Link
Steadfast, brave and full of gusto, the pointy-eared Link is the saviour of Hyrule.



Developed by Nintendo, *The Legend Of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* took visual and multiplayer elements from the GBA game, *A Link To The Past & Four Swords* (see 'A Link To The Palm' boxout), and brought an entirely new squad-based dynamic to the series. Slotting weirdly between two Game Boy Advance games, *Four Swords Adventures* would form the second game of *Zelda*'s *Four Swords* trilogy. It allowed one to four players (if you had a linkup cable and knew three people with a GBA) to control four differing coloured Links, position them into various formations and tier off to work together to solve the game's colour and teamwork-themed puzzles. The multiplayer emphasis of the game was further bolstered by a unique battle mode that allowed four friends to select a Link and duel to the death.

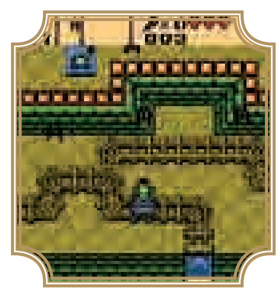
And so we reach the final game in our look back at the history of *Zelda*, a game that famously carried the weight of two consoles on its shoulders. After a one year delay, *Twilight Princess* would prove a fantastic farewell to the GameCube, but sadly a tepid and awkward debut for the Wii. With *The Wind Waker*, Nintendo's intention was to make a *Zelda* game that anyone could finish, and as a result many fans would bemoan the game for being far too easy. So Nintendo looked back to *Ocarina* as the blueprint for the style and direction for *Twilight Princess*. Running from a heavily tweaked *Wind Waker* engine, *Twilight Princess* looks to be the polar opposite to its GameCube sibling. In hindsight, it's actually a culmination of ideas and themes from the later *Zelda* games. It clearly borrows from *Ocarina Of Time* in terms of its visuals, adopts the darker undertones of *Majora's Mask*, and boasts the scale and subtle gameplay tweaks of *Wind Waker* – with regard to its cinematic look and continued use of facial expressions.

It was decided, mid-development, that the graphical style of the game would be altered. Early shots of the game showing Link inside a grey and desaturated world would reaffirm to fans that *Twilight Princess* was to be a darker direction for the series. However, the eventual graphical style would shift to a hazy world made of warm serene palettes, but that darker direction was kept. The game also contained more dungeons and more items than *Ocarina Of Time*, as was the intention by Nintendo to finally offer the hardcore *Zelda* fan a game to really test their mettle. While the Wii version is essentially an enhanced port of the GameCube release, the game would actually play out slightly differently; the game worlds were mirrored. Link has always been left-handed in the game, and if you were to look closely at the series, you'll notice that whatever direction Link (which, incidentally, means 'left' in German) is facing he will hold his sword in his left hand. With the advent of the Wii-remote controls in *Twilight Princess*, Nintendo realised that many players would be right-handed so would make Link enantiomorphic in the Wii version, and the game world would follow suit.

"It has always been important that the gamers grow together with Link" Shigeru Miyamoto

So what is it that makes the *Zelda* series so popular? Why does every new chapter create such an air of excitement surrounding a cloud of high expectations? Why do people meticulously dissect every screenshot, analyse and pore over every *Zelda*-related rumour and await the next chapter more so than any other videogame franchise to date? Miyamoto sums it up perfectly.

"I think many people dream about becoming heroes. For me it has always been important that the gamers grow together with Link, that there is a strong relationship between the one who holds the controller and the person on the screen. I have always tried to create the feeling that you really are in Hyrule. If you don't feel that way, it will lose some of its magic."



» Yep, even *Zelda* couldn't avoid a clichéd runaway mine section.

M is for Majora's Mask
An evil heart-shaped mask is what Link needs to save Termina.

N is for Nintendo
Nintendo is the creator of *Zelda* and the Walt Disney of videogames.

O is for Ocarina
The flute-type musical instrument that makes its first appearance in *Link's Awakening*.

P is for Pikmin
Like Pikmin, Miyamoto wanted Hyrule to feel like a virtual garden.

Q is for Quiver
The quiver is the item that holds Link's arrows.

R is for Rupees
The ruby-like currency of *Zelda* that Link can acquire by killing enemies and cutting the grass.

S is for Satellaview
The SNES equivalent of Xbox Live, only released in Japan, home to two *Zelda*-based games.

T is for Triforce
Is the sacred triangular relic that binds the characters and events of *Zelda* together.

U is for Underworld
The term for the underground dungeons beneath Hyrule.

V is for Vaati
Is the villain in the *Four Swords* series. Like Ganon he takes two forms: a human sorcerer and a giant bat eye with pincers.

W is for Wind Waker
Wind Waker was the first *Zelda* game for the GameCube, and marked a dramatic shift in the visual style of the franchise.

X is for X-rated action
It's implied throughout the series that Link and Zelda are romantically involved. If only they could remember.

Y is for Yoshi
Yoshi appears in *Link's Awakening* as a sought-after cuddly toy that Link must win.

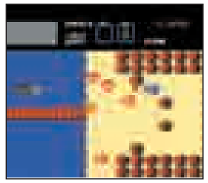
Z is for Zelda: Gaiden
Was the original working title for *Majora's Mask*.

ZELDA FAMILY TREE

While many of today's popular franchises have stemmed from the PSone generation, a few classics still stand their ground among the likes of *Crash Bandicoot* and *Tomb Raider*. The best known seem to come from Nintendo – whether it's *Mario*, *Donkey Kong*, or *Zelda*, Nintendo is the undisputed champion when it comes to creating long-lasting brands and characters.

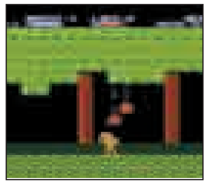
Of course, Mario is most synonymous with the company, but in recent years the *Zelda* franchise has received the majority of the attention, most likely because of the noise made by *Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* when it finally launched on N64 after a delay. So which is your favourite? Take a look at the *Zelda* family tree to refresh your memory. You may even find a few titles that you didn't even know existed…

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA



■ 1986
■ NES ■ Nintendo
■ Every great series has to start somewhere and for *Zelda* it was with launch of *Zelda No Densetsu* (*The Legend Of Zelda*) on Nintendo's Famicom Disk System. Because it was seen as something of a financial risk, the system never launched outside Japan – instead the game was translated to cartridge and released on NES.

ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK



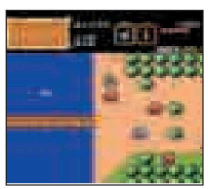
■ 1987
■ NES ■ Nintendo
■ While *The Legend Of Zelda* had laid down the foundation for almost every other *Zelda* title, the second game attempted to take the series in a slightly different direction. Rather than the typical *Zelda* viewpoint, much of this title was *Mario*-esque 2D platforming – a change that proved unpopular with many fans of the original.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST



■ 1991
■ SNES ■ Nintendo
■ Nintendo needed to demonstrate that the Super Famicom (SNES in the West) was superior, in terms of both technology and software, to Sega's Mega Drive, and it certainly did that with the resurrection of the *Zelda* series. A huge, sprawling role-playing game, *A Link To The Past* is considered by many to be the best game in the series.

BS THE LEGEND OF ZELDA



■ 1995
■ SNES ■ Nintendo
■ Based on the original NES *Zelda*, *BS The Legend Of Zelda* was only ever available in Japan and only on Nintendo's Satellaview – a SNES add-on that linked with a Japanese television system called GIGA and allowed users to download playable games. Sadly, Nintendo shut down the system before gamers could get the last instalments.

PHILIPS

LINK: THE FACES OF EVIL



■ 1993
■ CD-i ■ Philips
■ After cancelling its agreement with Sony to create a SNES add-on, Nintendo promptly signed a similar deal with Philips. But it was soon decided that an add-on was a bad idea and this deal was also cancelled. Philips was later given temporary use of the *Zelda* franchise as compensation. Oh, how we wish it wasn't…

ZELDA: THE WAND OF GAMELON



■ 1993
■ CD-i ■ Philips
■ While the title *Faces Of Evil* described how *Zelda* fans looked when they saw what Philips had done with Link, they were even more horrified when they saw how *Zelda* was portrayed on the CD-i. A Barbie-like heroine in a pink miniskirt may have seemed like a good idea to Philips, but for us things couldn't have got any worse… or could they?

ZELDA'S ADVENTURE



■ 1995
■ CD-i ■ Philips
■ If you thought that *Faces Of Evil* and *Wand Of Gamelon* were bad then you'd have been utterly disgusted with this. Although Philips' initial *Zelda* creations featured appealing artwork like that in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* games, *Zelda's Adventure* was realised through poorly rendered CG sprites and backgrounds, and live-action cut-scenes. Ugh.

SPIN OFFS

LCD GAMES



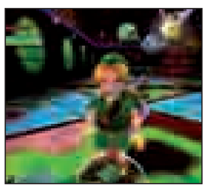
■ 1989
■ Various ■ Various
■ It appears that most popular series received an LCD adaptation at one time or another and Zelda is no different. Most famous were the *Zelda Game & Watch*, an impressive effort from Nintendo; and The *Legend Of Zelda* Game Watch, which was created by Nelsonic and saw Link collecting missing pieces of the Triforce.

OCARINA OF TIME/MASTER QUEST



■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo
■ Originally due to appear on the ill-fated 64DD, *Master Quest* eventually turned up as a promotional freebie for *The Wind Waker*. Dungeons are tougher than in *Ocarina Of Time* and also feature different puzzles, so even if you've played the original – also included – you've every reason to do it again. The package also contains videos for various GC releases.

ZELDA: COLLECTOR'S EDITION



■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo
■ Only available in promotional deals, this compilation contains emulated versions of *The Legend Of Zelda*, *Zelda II: The Adventures Of Link*, *Ocarina Of Time* and *Majora's Mask*. While both *Ocarina of Time* and *Majora's Mask* benefit from being displayed at 640x480p the latter has been known to crash. Worth owning if you don't have access to Virtual Console.



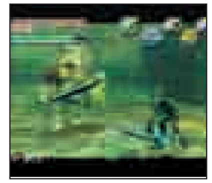


THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME



■ 1998
■ N64 ■ Nintendo
■ With seven years since the last big *Zelda* game, Nintendo had a lot to prove. Many things had changed during that time – including the introduction of 3D graphics – and it was unclear whether the classic *Zelda* formula would work as well as before. Thankfully, after numerous delays, the game managed to surpass almost everyone's expectations.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK



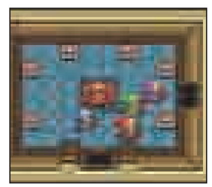
■ 2000
■ N64 ■ Nintendo
■ Although *Majora's Mask* was overseen by *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto, much of the creative process was handled by a then new team of upcoming designers and programmers at Nintendo of Japan. This, combined with a relatively short development period, raised doubts about the game's quality, but it was great anyway.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER



■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo
■ Although some gamers had reservations about the cartoon imagery used in this *Zelda* game, few could deny that Nintendo once again created a must-have title. While the *Zelda* series has often featured the theme of time travel, *The Wind Waker* uses the wind and the ocean as a basis for many of its puzzle and explorative elements.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES



■ 2004
■ GC ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Although unlike any other *Zelda, Four Swords Adventures* is still a great game that expanded on the connectivity between GC and GBA. Very linear, with some excellent puzzles, *FSA* is best played with three others. Although the US and UK versions feature the mini-game 'Shadow Battle', another, 'Navi Trackers' was only available on the Japanese version.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS



■ 2006
■ GC/Wii ■ Nintendo
■ Boasting a visual style that screams 'The Lord Of The Rings' and a brand new control system (if you own the Wii version that is) *Twilight Princess* is another essential addition to Nintendo's venerable franchise. Although often hailed as the greatest *Zelda* of all time, we'd give that accolade to *Ocarina Of Time*, as *Twilight Princess* sadly treads very similar ground.

OTHER GENRES

SUPER SMASH BROS



■ 1999
■ N64 ■ Nintendo/Hal Laboratories
■ Just like Marmite, *Super Smash Bros* was one of those games that you either loved or hated. Either way, no one could dispute that this was a massive success for Nintendo, partly because so many of Nintendo's favourite characters were included. As well as Mario, Donkey Kong, and a range of Pokémon, Link was among the line-up.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE



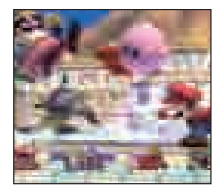
■ 2002
■ GC ■ Nintendo/Hal Laboratories
■ Aside from some very nice visuals, *Super Smash Bros Melee* was really nothing more than an update of the N64 original. Again, there was a heavy emphasis on Pokémon (which probably explains why *Melee* is still the best-selling GameCube game in Japan), and again Link appeared, this time with Ganondorf, Zelda and, Sheik.

SOUL CALIBUR II



■ 2003
■ GC ■ Nintendo/Namco
■ When Nintendo first demonstrated its GameCube technology, it did so with a beautifully crafted fight scene between Link and his arch rival Ganon. Although the imagery was never used in a finished Nintendo product, a rumour suggested that Namco would feature a similar rendition of Link in the Cube version of *Soul Calibur II*. And it was true.

SUPER SMASH BROS BRAWL



■ 2008
■ Wii ■ Nintendo
■ Although still not available in the UK, *Brawl* is the best game in the series and nothing has stopped us enjoying it. With plenty of new characters, each with access to a new highly powerful 'Final Smash' move, the fan service has been cranked up to 11. Throw in online play and you have a game no self-respecting Nintendo fan should be without.

HANDHELD

LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING



■ 1993
■ GB ■ Nintendo
■ While much of Game Boy's initial software was fairly simplistic, a few years with the technology had given Nintendo enough knowledge to create an RPG. *Link's Awakening* was surprisingly good considering the Game Boy's limitations – even successfully using the odd side-scrolling section as seen in *The Adventure Of Link*.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING DX



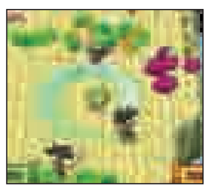
■ 1998
■ GBC ■ Nintendo
■ Although this was essentially the same as the Game Boy version of *Link's Awakening* (released five years previously), a number of amendments had been made. Obviously, there was the inclusion of colour, but more impressive was the way it was used to enhance the game using colour-based puzzles. There was also an extra dungeon.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LTTP/FOUR SWORDS



■ 2003
■ GBA ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Thanks to the versatility of the GBA, Nintendo has been able to resurrect the SNES classic *A Link To The Past*. The best part is that not only do you get a carbon copy of the original game, but you also get a brand new four-player link-up game, developed by Capcom exclusively for Game Boy Advance, in which you and three friends work co-operatively.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS



■ 2007
■ DS ■ Nintendo
■ Despite the delays, Link's first DS adventure was worth the wait. Using the machine's innovative controls – Link is controlled by the stylus – *Phantom Hourglass* features a strong story, excellent and extremely clever puzzles, and some beautiful *Wind Waker*-style visuals. Our only criticism with it is that, like *The Minish Cap*, it's over too soon.

CAPCOM

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF SEASONS



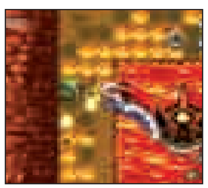
■ 2001
■ GBC ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Contrary to what you may have heard, *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons* were two completely different games. While *Ages* used the theme of time travel to introduce many of its puzzles, *Seasons* used different times of the year to similar effect. By switching between winter, spring, summer, and autumn, various routes and secret items were revealed.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES



■ 2001
■ GBC ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Nintendo's current ties with Capcom and the *Resident Evil* series may have stemmed from *Oracle Of Ages* and *Oracle Of Seasons* as they were both created by Capcom, rather than in-house. Sharing many similarities with *A Link To The Past, Oracle Of Ages* used time travel to introduce puzzles and themes as the game progressed.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP



■ 2004
■ GBA ■ Nintendo/Capcom
■ Unlike most other Zelda games, *The Minish Cap* revolves around the legend of the *Four Swords* (not surprising as the other two titles are by the same developer). It also introduces a talking cap called Ezlo, and the Picori, a race of tiny beings. Puzzles shrink Link down in size and introduce three new items: the Gust Jar, Mole Mitts, and the Cane of Pacci.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA GALLERY



The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time Year Released: 1998



The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time Year Released: 1998



The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask Year Released: 2000



The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker Year Released: 2002



The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past Year Released: 2002



The Legend Of Zelda: The Minish Cap Year Released: 2004

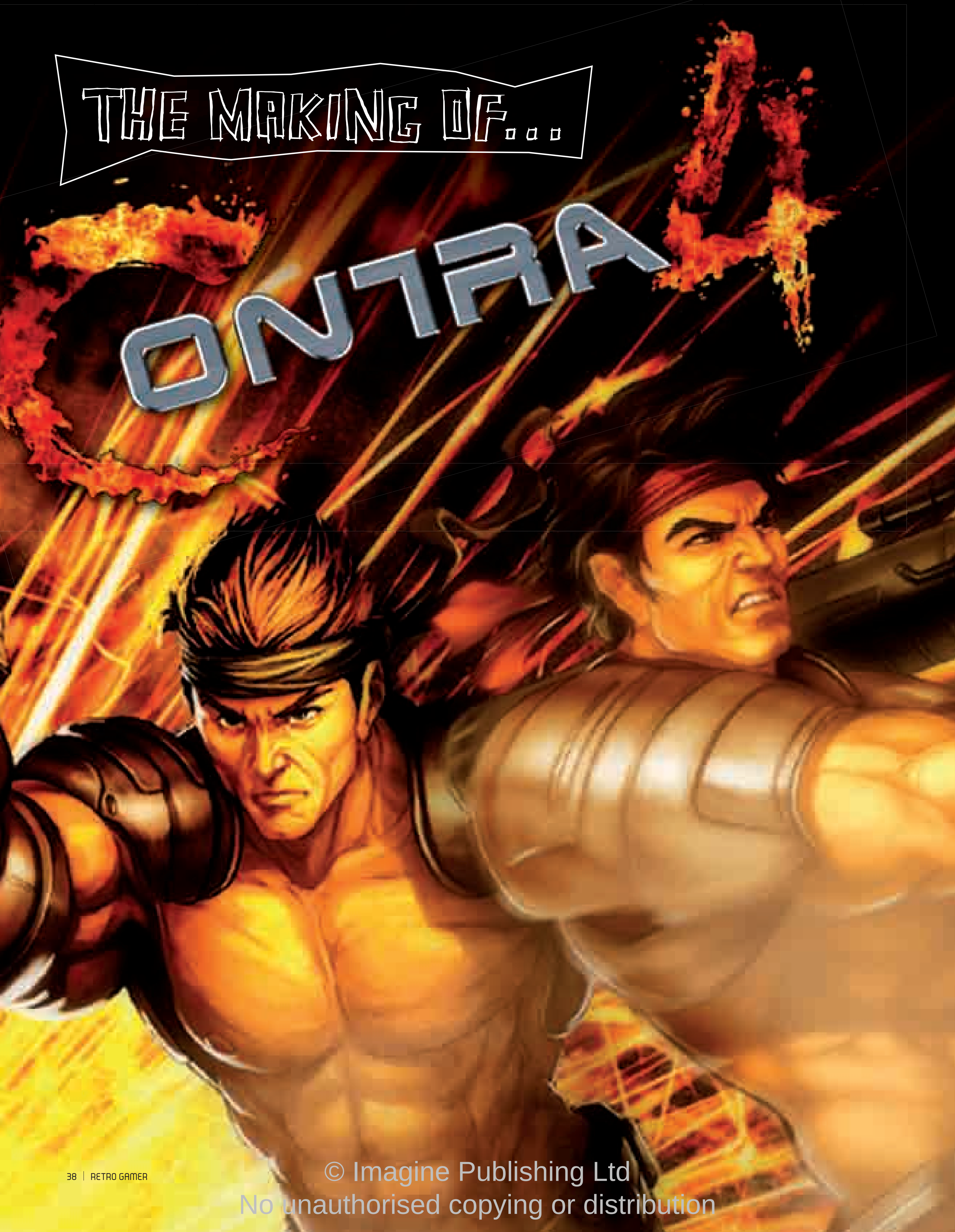


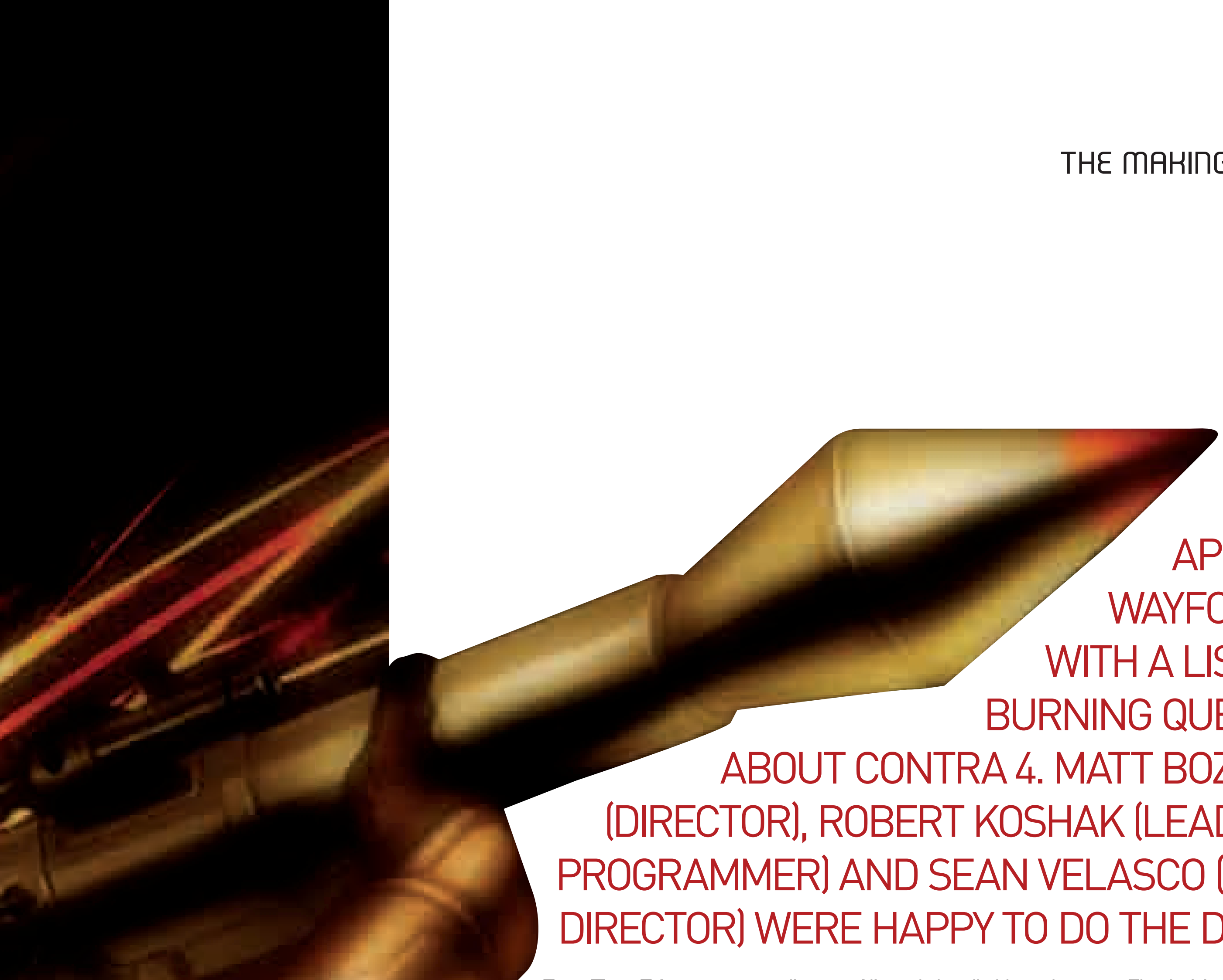
The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess Year Released: 2006



The Legend Of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass Year Released: 2007

THE MAKING OF...





STUART RECENTLY APPROACHED WAYFORWARD WITH A LIST OF BURNING QUESTIONS ABOUT CONTRA 4. MATT BOZON (DIRECTOR), ROBERT KOSHAK (LEAD PROGRAMMER) AND SEAN VELASCO (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR) WERE HAPPY TO DO THE DOUSING

When we first heard that Konami was working on a new *Contra* for the DS – a machine that splits the action of its games across two screens and has fire-buttons the size of ant droppings – and had entrusted the project to a company who's résumé includes *WWF Betrayal* and something about the Scorpion King having psoriasis, we admit that we unwrapped our early US copy with uneasy fingers.

What we wanted was a sharp, old-school run-'n'-gunner that harked back to the good old days of gaming, the days where we actually had to rely on extra lives instead of waiting for the screen to stop blurring at the corners, battle across levels that got progressively harder not progressively samey, and didn't involve controlling an egg cup using masturbatory hand signals. We wanted *Contra 4* to be a game where enemies packed more punch than a marionette convention, and boasted the kind of level design that would make you want to pause the game, unceremoniously grab the person nearest to you and waste one of your lives by placing the pad/DS into their hands and saying 'just play it'. However, *Contra 4*, against all the odds and a wave of uncertainty, would deliver. And we're so pleased it did.

WayForward is located in the serene setting of Valencia, California. With a pedigree on Nintendo handhelds, and experience working on both licensed and original projects, it was actually Konami that would approach the team to take a crack at commemorating the 20th anniversary of the *Contra* series. As we had predicted back in our review of the game (issue 46), the team responsible at WayForward were made up of *Contra* fans, fans mostly brought up running and gunning through the alien-invaded jungles of the *Contra* and *Super C* games on the NES.

WayForward considers its forte to be in sprite-based 2D games, but despite *Contra 4*'s visuals clearly jumping ecstatically inside that comfort zone, owing to the practicalities of building the game using a new engine and stretching the action over two screens, its development wouldn't prove a walk in the park by any means.

"We definitely encountered some challenges in developing the game," says lead programmer Robert Koshak. "Not only was *Contra 4* the first 2D game developed with our new DS engine, but it was dual screen. It took us some time and effort to get used to the new engine and some unexpectedly needed engine features had to be added on the fly. Because of the dual-screen design we were not able to take full advantage of the DS's 3D hardware, because it only renders to one screen. The DS has dual-screen support for the 3D hardware only, but we thought that there were too many limitations in this mode for the game."

The decision to keep the game 2D was adopted to allow the action to be split across two screens and to maintain a high frame rate. The game was also intended to support four-player action via Wi-Fi (some may remember a few early screens on the internet that back this up), but the decision was eventually taken to drop it to just two players. We asked director Matt Bozon why.

"Our first playable incarnation was four-player Wi-Fi, but it was taking us in the direction of a wildly unbalanced game with fewer bells and whistles," he says. "We dabbled with Rumble Pak, but the team wanted each feature done right or not at all." Assistant director Sean Velasco continues, "Dropping four-player Wi-Fi hurt. I still feel the frustration of the bullets in the virtual gap. I would have liked to see an aim lock (so you could move and shoot in one direction). I also wish the characters were more differentiated, with different weapons or movement styles."

WayForward's approach to creating *Contra 4* was a case of the team simply sticking to what they knew best about the series. As we said earlier, the team had a clear grounding with the first games in the series – particularly the NES games – and were keen to use them as a framework for their game.

"The plan from both companies was to stick to *Contra* NES, *Super C*, and *III*," says Matt. "We looked to *Contra* NES as the blueprint for its pure white-knuckle action and platform elements, and *III*

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
» **DEVELOPER:** WAYFORWARD
» **SYSTEMS:** DS
» **RELEASED:** 2007
» **GENRE:** RUN-'N'-GUN
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** UK – AROUND £29.99 US – AROUND £17.82 (ON WWW.PLAY-ASIA.COM)

THE MAKING OF… CONTRA 4

for player movement and how to dissect set pieces. We wanted to steer clear of anything too outrageous, since recent *Contra*s had gone off on a rabbit trail. This was the back-to-basics game."

For the look and feel of the levels the team would take familiar moments from past games and update them. It was a notion they felt would suit the essence of a 20th anniversary sequel, and, hopefully, result in a game that would appease fans of the series. For the game's bosses WayForward's approach was to realise a way to make them feel integral to the level and not just act as impressive-looking bookends to the action.

"Most of the concepts were 'design first'," says Sean. "Once we decided that our heroes would be fighting a massive fish or clutching a launching missile during a gunfight, it would then be handed to an artist for design. Creating the multi-segmented creatures, like the waterfall alien, required additional processing to cut apart the segments and fill in the gaps. We tossed in more platforming and dropped the boss-rush style of the later *Contra* games. Our philosophy from the onset was *Contra* + *Contra III* = *Contra 4*."

One of WayForward's new additions was the grappling hook, which allows you to effortlessly flit between screens on the DS. But with the other games in the series surviving reasonably well without it, we wondered what the actual reasoning behind its inclusion was. "We needed a wide virtual gap, so that bullets would appear to travel in a straight line," says Matt. "Early on, we had a cheat that let us increase or decrease the gap size in real-time. With bullets shearing, you couldn't aim well, or predict enemy bullet paths, so, we added the grappling hook, in the hope of avoiding the action getting hidden in the gap. We also cranked up gravity so you could fall faster than in other *Contra* games. All of this because of the screen ratio. It's much taller than an arcade cabinet. If you want to feel our pain, stack two Post-it notes and that's our play space."

One of our favourite features of *Contra 4* was the return of the *Cabal*-style run-'n'-gun tunnel sections of the original game. While other games inside the series would incorporate their own slants on these sections – the overhead Mode 7 sections in *Contra III* immediately springs to mind – we were pleased to see them make a comeback.

"I really enjoyed those in the SNES game," says Matt. "But we decided early on that the tunnel view was the way to go. Konami loved the tunnel/base levels in original *Contra*, and thought it would be a good choice for the 20th anniversary game. We considered branching paths within the maze, but in the end had to keep it simple."

Given that *Contra 4* feels so faithful to the original games, we expected Konami to have been overseeing the project every step of the way. The first two levels play like an unrestrained homage to the first two stages of *Contra*, with a brilliant reinvention of the bosses. The game then segues brilliantly into *Contra III* country, feeling like it has less emphasis on platforming and twitch-gunplay and more on delivering impressive set pieces and sprawling boss battles. Overall, the visual style is *Contra III* with whiter veneers, with the gameplay encapsulating the very best bits of the series.

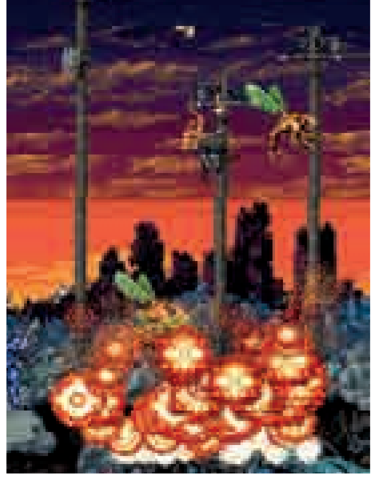
"Konami gave us initial direction, reviewed what we were doing, and made suggestions," says Sean. "We challenged each other's *Contra* philosophy, as the source material was 20 years old. But yes, they let us implement our own vision of *Contra*. Konami was with us every step of the way… even when we disagreed on a few issues, it was a good thing. These types of philosophical conversations are what hone a game to a razor edge."

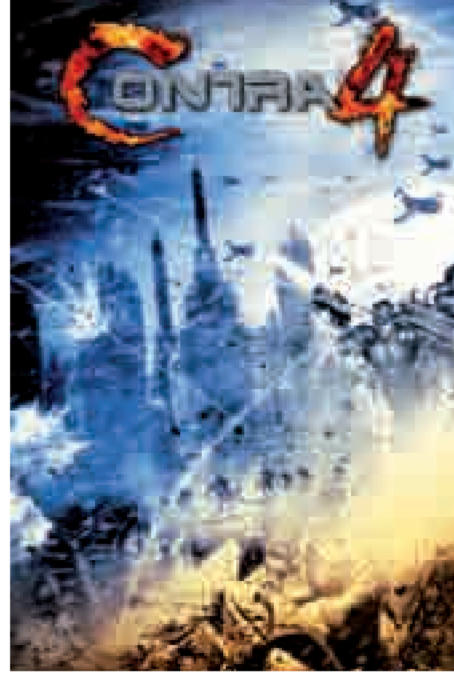
As well as serving as a stylistic love letter to the defining games of the series, WayForward would also look to round everything off melodiously by choosing to reboot the iconic *Contra* cacophonies for the soundtrack.

"Our approach to the music was similar to the stage breakdown," says Matt. "We had a nice split of nostalgia and new stuff, which Jake Kaufman (Virt) served up with gusto. For me, I don't think it's *Contra* without the Jungle Song, title "Call To Arms" song, and the Game Over song. You need to hear that." Sean adds, "As a 'back to the roots' effort, we tried to get a good mix of *Contra* and *Alien Wars* with the music. This was my first opportunity to work with Jake, and I think he nailed it. I think the mix of homage and newness is perfect. I love the credits music. They just don't write 'em like that any more!

Contra 4's eventual release in the US saw it receive some impressive scores (we gave it 92%). But the game wasn't without criticism. Some mags would lambast it for falling short on its promise to deliver a four-player co-op, and also for being a tough nut to crack. And Matt doesn't shirk those arguments either, even admitting to not being able to finish the game on Hard. But he believes that challenge should always serve as the carrot on the stick for the most elite *Contra* fan to try to aspire to.

Given the sterling work the team put into creating *Contra 4*, we couldn't help but ask whether they were planning to make another *Contra* game for Konami. "We have plenty of ideas if Konami wants to hire us again," muses Matt. Maybe in another 20 years then chaps?







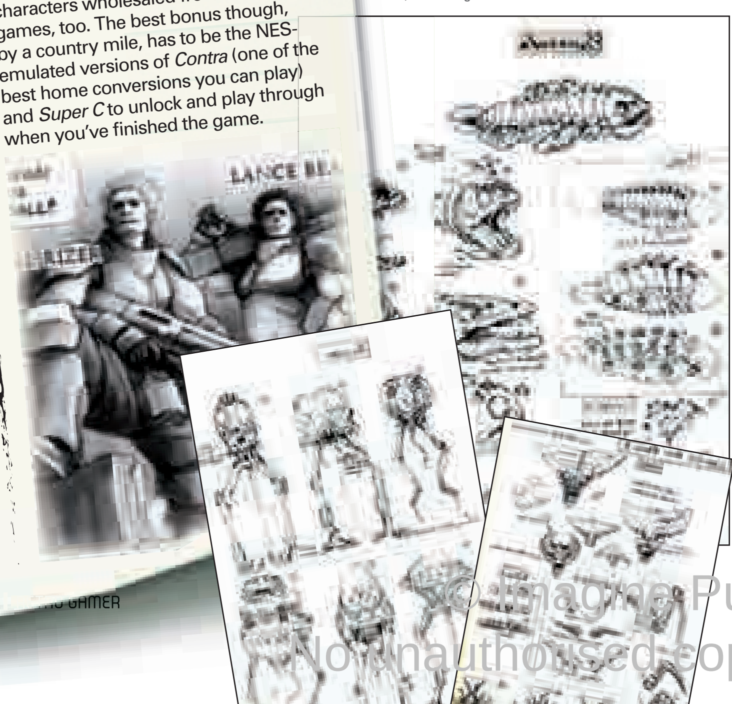
» One of the new stages WayForward has added is a claustrophobic laboratory ransacked by hordes of aliens and zombies, not a great combination.



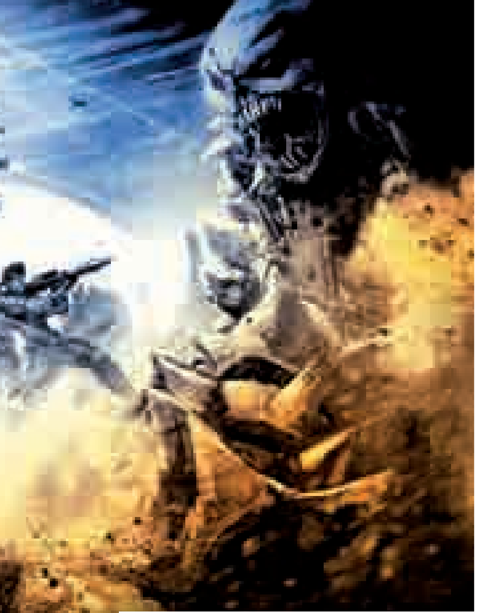
» WayForward was keen to bring back the tunnel sections from the original game.

PACKED FULLY LOADED

If you read our *Contra 4* review you might remember us getting somewhat giddy over the sheer amount of added extras and Easter eggs that were packed into the game. Just for starters there's the Challenge mode, which can be unlocked by completing the game, a museum housing a fine selection of *Contra* antiquities, including a timeline, screenshots of the previous games of the series and illustrations and concept art. Plus, there's a wealth of unlockable characters wholesaled from the previous games, too. The best bonus though, by a country mile, has to be the NES-emulated versions of *Contra* (one of the best home conversions you can play) and *Super C* to unlock and play through when you've finished the game.



» Here's some *Contra* art for the infamous Barracuda boss, aka George.



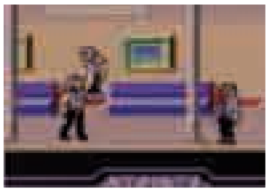
» Above is some of the artwork used to celebrate both *Contra 4* and the franchise's twentieth birthday. Highly stylised, it gives a good indication of the mayhem found in the game.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE SCORPION KING: SWORD OF OSIRIS
SYSTEM: GBA
YEAR: 2002

SIGMA STAR SAGA
SYSTEM: GBA
YEAR: 2006

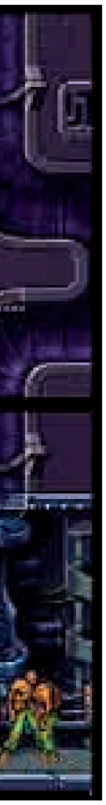
WWF BETRAYAL (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: GBC
YEAR: 2001

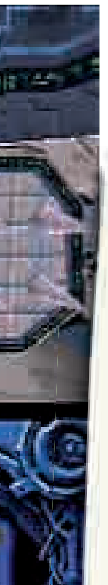


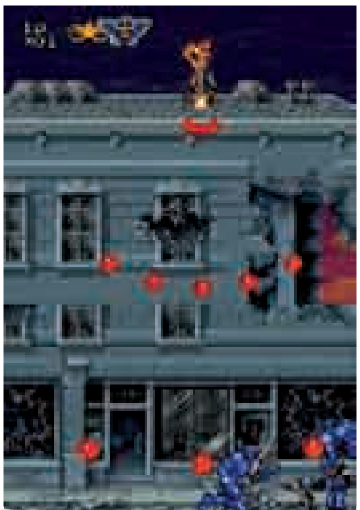




» "Wild boys, never lose it. Wild boys, never chose this way. Wild boys, never close your eyes. Wild booooooys, always shiiiiiine."







REBOOT



Given that the chaps at WayForward did such a great job of delivering a *Contra* game that retained all those classic little *Contra* nuances that we wanted, we wondered whether there were any other classic franchises the guys would like to have a stab at, and we got some pretty interesting responses, especially from Sean (who we think likes *Metroid*).

MATT BOZON
I'll list three… *Castlevania* arcade-style, *Kid Icarus* with dual screens and *The Guardian Legend*!

SEAN VELASCO
Please give me a side-scrolling *Metroid*, a *Metroid*-style *Mega Man* (which is long overdue) a sequel to *Ninja Five-O* and for my oddball choice, *E.V.O.: Search For Eden*.

WHO DARES WINS II

YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP



- » **PUBLISHER:** ALLIGATA
- » **RELEASED:** 1986
- » **GENRE:** RUN-'N'-GUN
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** CPC
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID



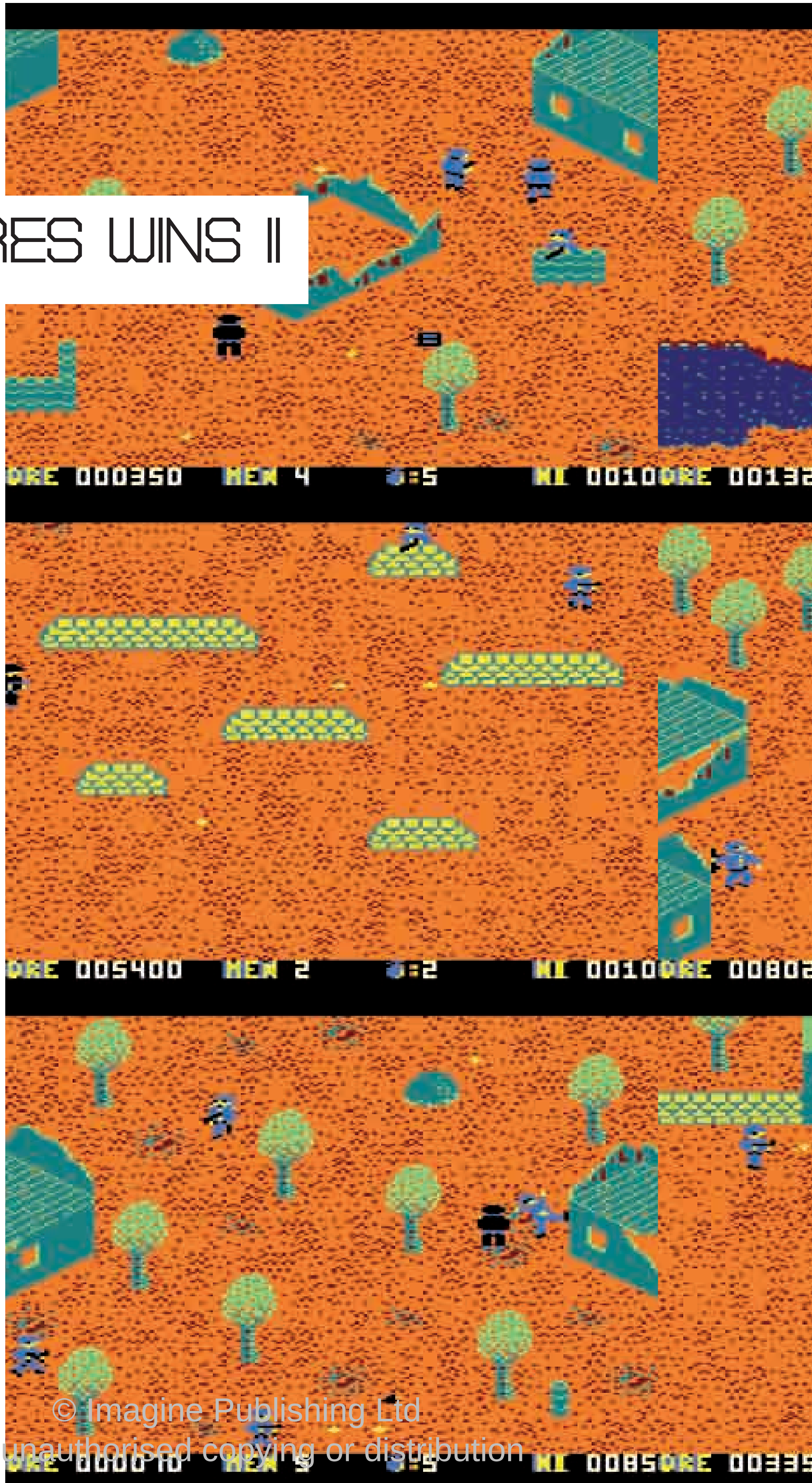
HISTORY

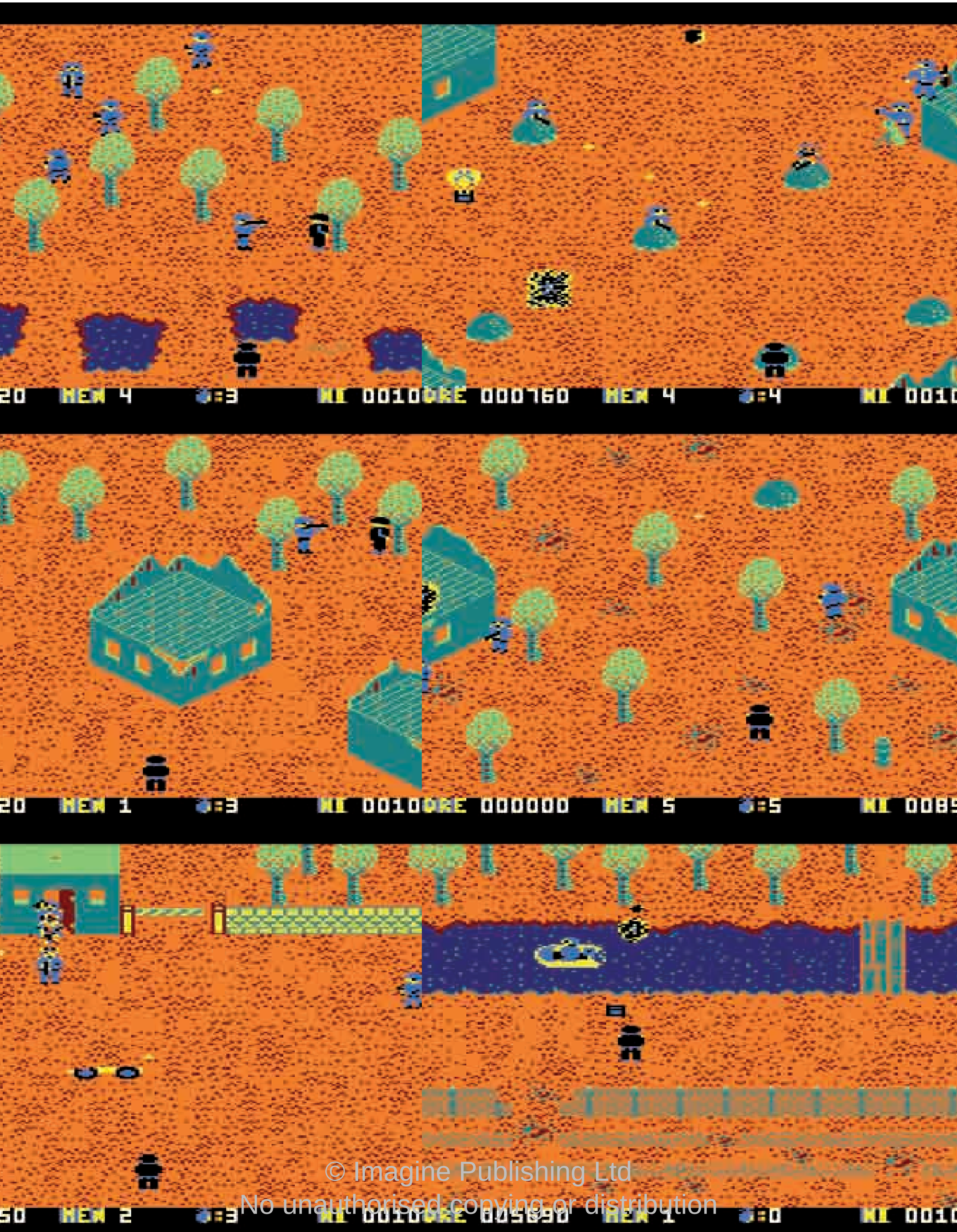
As much as I love *Commando,* Elite's home port isn't a patch on the arcade game. So, whenever I decided I needed a quick *Commando* fix, I would always stare disapprovingly at its cassette case and then cushion the pain by loading up this brilliant *Commando* clone by Steve Evans.

Despite both games sharing that familiar 'lone soldier' setting, in *Who Dares Wins II* you play a Pete Doherty lookalike who has to vanquish an army of Teletubbies, who are armed with machine guns and pineapple grenades. It's weirdly brilliant. You see, the heinous cuddly creatures are trying to execute clones of Pete by confidently tying them to stakes in the midst of the conflict and then taking around ten seconds to actually pull the triggers on their weapons.

Thankfully, the rest of the AI demonstrated in the game was actually pretty good. While enemy walk patterns seem to demonstrate little rhyme or reason, walking past a soldier that's cowardly tossing grenades at you from behind a boulder, will cause the jerk to hightail it out of there and continue the fight on a random foot. The game is also slightly fairer than *Commando,* thanks to its tighter collision detection and a brilliant one-button fire system that allows you to shoot by tapping the fire button, and effortlessly throw grenades by holding it down.

In the game, you have to save your captured comrades by securing the outposts that appear at the end of each level. Like *Commando,* when you reach them, the game begins to throw up enemies like frozen peas. The mission draws to a close once the entire screen has been emptied. With *Who Dares Wins II* you get a real sense that Steve, rather than make a pretty looking port that plays like a cotton piano, really wanted to try to capture the essence of Capcom's arcade classic. So, if you're any kind of *Commando* fan you should really make it your next mission to track this game down.




20 MEN 4 :3 HI 0010
ORE 000760 MEN 4 :4 HI 0010
20 MEN 1 :3 HI 0010
ORE 000000 MEN 5 :5 HI 0085
50 MEN 2 :3 HI 0010
ORE 005690 MEN 1 :0 HI 0010

THE MAKING OF...

INDIANA JONES and the FATE of ATLANTIS

Nazis? Check. Sassy, but gorgeous, female sidekick? Check. Globetrotting plot involving mysterious ancient supernatural MacGuffin? Check. They don't make 'em like this any more… Mike Bevan speaks to Atlantis project leader Hal Barwood about the creation of the ultimate whip-crackin' Indy adventure game





Hal Barwood is, in every sense of the phrase, a Renaissance man. Cutting his teeth as a Hollywood scriptwriter he penned contributions to the likes of Spielberg's *The Sugarland Express* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. (The landing location of the alien mothership at the film's finale, the iconic Devils Tower, was his suggestion. His reward? A small cameo as one of the pilots of long-lost Flight 19). In his role as producer on the Disney movie *Dragonslayer* (which he also co-scripted), he created a perennial cult favourite of many fantasy fans. And he even found a little time to put together a few games for LucasArts featuring the 'Man In The Hat'.

"I'm an old friend of George Lucas," begins Hal. "We went to film school together, and he knew of my interest in games way back in the early Eighties, when Lucasfilm Games was forming. He introduced me to Steve Arnold, who ran the Games Group for several years, and I started to hang around the company. I met David Fox, Ron Gilbert and Noah Falstein during that period. These guys worked hard as a triumvirate to produce the first Lucasfilm licensed property ever, *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* – a wonderful game based on the last *Jones* movie, and a sizeable hit." When *Last Crusade* wrapped, the LucasArts team fragmented and moved on to other things, so when the decision was made to create an Indy adventure sequel the door fell open for Hal. "They all had other projects they wanted to pursue," he explains. "David wanted to move over into public space interactive attractions, Ron was busy on *Monkey Island*, and Noah was starting out on *The Dig*. They needed someone to rescue them from *Jones*, and they picked me."

Hal's proven scriptwriting background was an obvious advantage when it came to producing a traditional graphic adventure. Coupled with his avid interest in gaming (he'd once driven 200 miles for a game of *Computer Space*), he suited the project perfectly. "I had been designing 'paper games' since I was a kid," reveals Hal, "and I had taught myself assembly language and built a flawed, but elaborate, RPG/action-adventure game on the Apple II platform on my own. So I sort of knew what I was getting into, and sort of knew what I was doing."

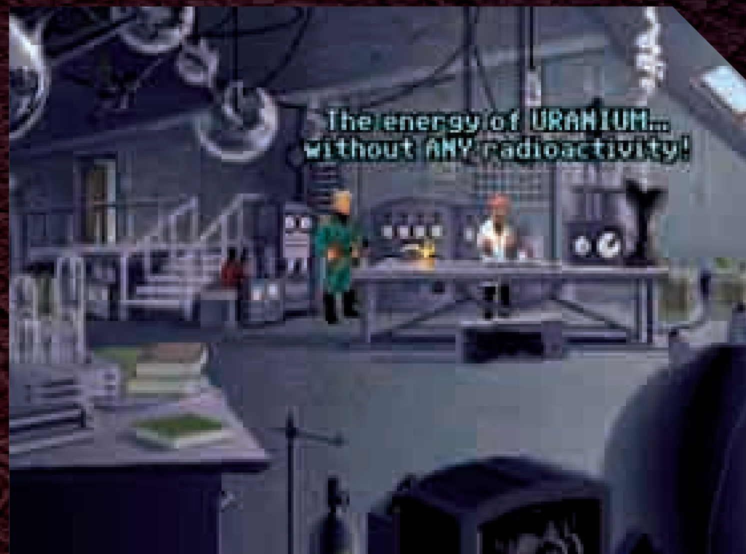
IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **PLATFORMS:** PC (PICTURED) AMIGA, MAC, FM TOWN MARTY
- » **GENRE:** GRAPHIC ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5-£10



» Two guesses how well this request goes down with the doorman.



» At least they're doing their bit for global warming.

The as-yet-untitled sequel to *Last Crusade* would, of course, become *The Fate Of Atlantis*, popularly hailed as the greatest *Indiana Jones* computer game of all time, as well as one of the most respected of LucasArts' 'classic' graphic adventures. The game perfectly captures the spirit of the three existing *Indy* movies, while offering an original premise that stands up surprisingly well in comparison to those of the films. Indy's frantic race against the Nazis to discover the whereabouts, and potentially lethal secrets, of the long-lost civilisation of Atlantis, accompanied by the beautiful, but infuriating, spiritualist Sophia Hapgood, is a masterful piece of storytelling, and a spellbinding adventure.

"FATE OF ATLANTIS'S ALTERNATIVE TAKE ON A CLASSIC MYTHOLOGY, WITH AN ADDED SPRINKLING OF HISTORICAL FACT, CREATES A BEGUILING QUEST"

Like the films, *Fate Of Atlantis*'s alternative take on a classic mythology, with an added sprinkling of historical fact – the sub-quest for the Lost Dialogue of Plato (the Greek scholar did indeed describe Atlantis in some detail) – creates a beguiling quest for the heroic archaeologist and his beau. "*Jones* adventures take place in an exaggerated version of the real world, with plenty of legitimate references to the treasures of antiquity," acknowledges Hal. "It's easy to run out of actual historical places and artefacts, but Atlantis is at least a 'real' myth – it all started with Plato, so its pedigree is perfect."

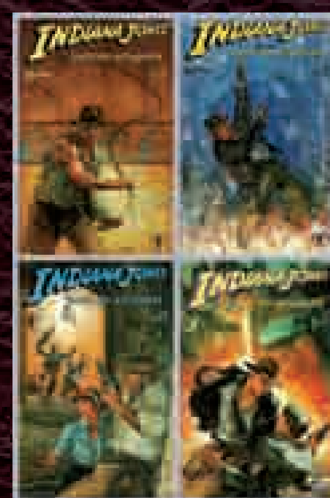
The fact that, in the absence of any new Indy movies to base a game on after *Last Crusade*, Hal was ultimately given free reign (and a helping hand, when available, from Noah Falstein) to create an original story would contribute greatly to his affinity for the project as it evolved. To begin with, however, a recently rejected *Indiana Jones* film script by Chris Columbus, writer of *Gremlins* and *The Goonies*, was proposed as the basis of the plot. The narrative would have taken Indy to Africa in pursuit of a number of long-vanished Chinese artefacts, hardly the strongest story idea the franchise had ever seen. "When I signed up, it was on the understanding that I would develop a game based on an un-produced *Indy* script," explains Hal. "But after reading it I decided it was un-produced for a reason, and wanted something else. I don't think anyone already inside the company was all that enthusiastic about the script either, but I'm the one who said the emperor lacked clothes. Anyway, Noah and I strolled over to George's well-supplied research library, pulled out some cheap coffee-table book on the world's unsolved mysteries and spotted a diagram of Atlantis. The city, we were informed, according to such an august authority as Plato, was divided into three concentric rings. The layout just shouted, 'I want to be a game!' and we agreed."

And like all good yarns based loosely on historical fact, a great deal of further, detailed research was necessary to flesh out the story in a convincing manner. Hal and Noah would spend many hours poring over theories and explanations of the Atlantean legends in the library at Skywalker Ranch, while assembling the lengthy script for the game. "Plato mentions Atlantis in a couple of his 'dialogues', and I came up with the notion of another work by Plato, lost to history, that detailed the place," says Hal. "It was hard slogging to get through some of the crackpot ideas about Atlantis, but on the whole it was great fun."

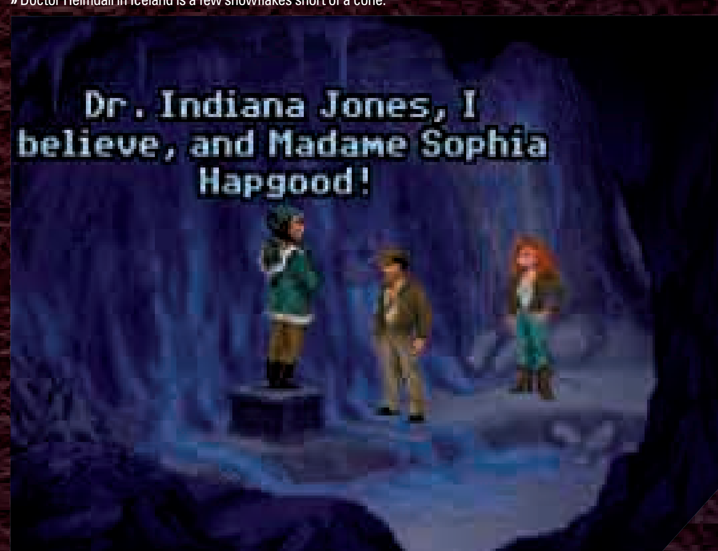
During the research sessions Hal would learn about the semi-precious alloy orichalcum, supposedly invented by the Atlanteans, which would become the basis of Indy's competitive rivalry with the Nazi powers. It also fell to Hal to conceive of the game's evocative title, which slots wonderfully well into the *Indiana Jones* universe. "The guy who ran the company just had no feeling for this sort of thing," he says, "and just wanted to call it, '*Indy's Next Adventure*', but thankfully he and his marketing group eventually came around. I've always thought there's something classy about the title that tells the potential player, 'hey, this will be good'."

There there was the small but critical concern of keeping continuity within the confines of the *Indiana Jones* universe for the game's plot, as well as the obvious need to instil the final product with an authentic feel of 'Indy-ness'. "There was a timeline bible meant for authors who wrote *Jones* comic books

» A four-part comic adaptation based on the game's script was published between March and September 1991 by Dark Horse Comics.



» Doctor Heimdall in Iceland is a few snowflakes short of a cone.



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS

ATLANTIS – MYTH OR HISTORY?

Ever since the Greek scholar Plato described Atlantis in his two 'dialogues', writers and historians have argued about the possible location of the legendary 'lost continent'. Some placed it in the Atlantic (citing the Azores or the Canaries as possible candidates), others off the Pacific coast of America, in the Mediterranean Sea, and even beneath Antarctica. In an eerie mirroring of the *Fate Of Atlantis* plot, Heinrich Himmler was involved in organising a 1938 expedition to the Tibetan plateau, where Nazi theorists sought evidence of a supposed Atlantean master race.

Although Plato placed the mythical kingdom outside the Pillars of Hercules (the modern day Straits of Gibraltar), one of the strongest cases for inspiring his fables would be Thera (Santorini), a volcanic island in the Aegean Sea, some 70 miles off Crete. Sometime between the 17th Century and 15th Century BC, the island exploded in a spectacular eruption, many times more powerful than that of Krakatoa, one of the most violent eruptions of modern times. The resulting volcanic fallout, and a theorised massive tsunami, is thought to have decimated the once mighty Minoan civilisation on nearby Crete. The eruption totally destroyed the centre of the island, and the results can be seen today in the form of a massive caldera, several miles across. Although the location of *Fate Of Atlantis*'s ringed city is never explicitly revealed, the game's plot is very much inspired by this theory, with a Mediterranean setting for Atlantis very close to Thera's real-life location.



and novels," divulges Hal. "But that was of trivial importance. The main research was done sitting on a couch watching the movies unspool on video tape."

When it came to creating the supporting characters around our Fedora-sporting protagonist, Hal's addition of Indy's glamorous ally Sophia Hapgood, along with the Nazi antagonist Klaus Kerner, rounded out the cast of the story. Sophia, possessor of a supposed Atlantean necklace, a pivotal plot device later in the game, may or may not also be under the spiritual influence of an ancient and malevolent Atlantean god. "We needed someone to unlock the story, and someone who could provide a key to its resolution," explains Hal. "Kerner and his pals served the former purpose, and Sophia, with her physical and psychic bonds to the evil Nur-Ab-Sal provided the latter."

Not averse to a little background 'digging' ourselves, **RG** puts forward the theory that Sophia's family name might have been inspired by Charles Hapgood, an American academic who wrote and lectured on many archaeological subjects, including the possibility of the existence of a 'real-life' Atlantis. "I can't remember!" says Hal. "There was a real Hapgood who trudged through South America uncovering Mayan sites, and if that's the guy, then that's the guy." He also says that, as a writer, the character was the most enjoyable of the supporting cast to conceive. "The truth is, they were all fun, but Sophia entertained me the most. Being at cross-purposes with Indy, with a guilty secret, with psychic powers, with a sharp tongue in her mouth, she energised the story."

Both LucasArts' *Indiana Jones* graphic adventures are renowned as being among the only titles in the company's adventure catalogue allowing players to actually meet a sticky end, in stark contrast, for example, to the nigh-on invulnerable Guybrush from the *Monkey Island* games. The development meeting for *Last Crusade*, between a nervous David Fox and Noah Falstein, and Indy's 'creators' Lucas and Spielberg, in which the game writers nervously asked the film-making duo if they would kindly give permission for Jones to 'die' in their game, is the stuff of legend. *Fate Of Atlantis* resurrected Indy's hard-won gaming mortality to create further tension for the player, in the spirit of the knife-edge matinee suspense of a *Jones* flick. "I just wish we had done more," admits Hal. "I would have liked a more sophisticated fighting mechanic, that's for sure. As to dying, it certainly went against the grain of the LucasArts house style, but felt right for Indy. In my mind, it's not a legitimate Jones yarn if he's not in mortal danger."



» Indy's other pet hate besides the goose-stepping bad guys.

Fans of the game will remember that early on in the adventure, *Fate* offers a choice of three 'paths' through the main bulk of the story; Team, Fists or Wits. Depending on the player's preference (Sophia's company and hopeful co-operation, bare-knuckled action, or solo puzzle-solving), the game experience will change accordingly. Different ways of tackling puzzles and obstacles will present themselves, with the storyline and in-game dialogue being expertly adapted to each permutation of events. To gain the game's maximum IQ (Indy Quotient) score, players must complete each path in turn. Hal concedes that creating and scripting these separate 'paths' was a challenging and time-consuming process. "Noah wanted to do the three paths," explains Hal. "He knew that the adventure-game audience shrinks from twitchy gameplay, and to be true to Jones we required some fisticuffs, so he wanted nervous players to find a way to avoid the action stuff. Once we had settled on the overarching story and an outline of the paths, Noah went on to his other projects, and the details were left to me. So we found ways to vary the experience, each path with some overlap, and each path with some unique features."

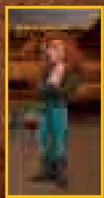
"I was enthusiastic, and it took me a while to understand how much work I was in for," he continues. "Right in the middle of development, management started to get cold feet, but they never insisted on getting rid of the paths. I did do some trimming, however. The paths converge upon arrival in Atlantis. And we discovered that we should get

» Never use sarcasm on a woman stuck in a hole in the middle of the Sahara.

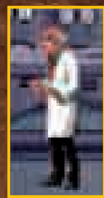


FATE of ATLANTIS - the players

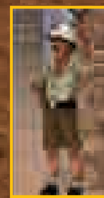
He's back. And this time he hasn't brought his dad. But here's a selection of some of the supporting characters from the game



Sophia Hapgood
A beautiful spiritualist with a deep interest in Atlantean matters. But is she to be trusted?



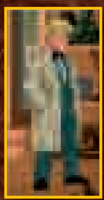
Dr Hans Ubermann
The brains behind the Third Reich's plans to reactivate the lost power of Atlantis.



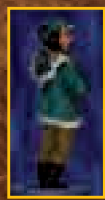
Charles Sternhart
Another seeker of Plato's Lost City. He is first encountered in the jungles of Tikal.



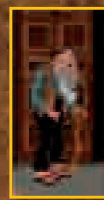
Omar Al-Jabbar
Owner of an Algerian antiques shop and a number of mysteriously unreliable camels.



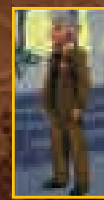
Klaus Kerner
A conceited Nazi agent who takes great pleasure in thwarting our hero at every opportunity.



Dr Bjorn Heimdall
An archaeologist attempting to discover evidence of an Icelandic Atlantean outpost.



Philip Costa
This eccentric chap just might have some useful information on Plato's Lost Dialogue.



Alain Trottier
Omar's business associate in Monte Carlo. Has a fascination with matters of the occult.

Sophia offstage whenever possible. Having her follow Indy everywhere proved to be a nightmare. Too many opportunities for inane conversations, too much awkwardness in setting up stunts and so on. Getting the paths done added around six months to the project and many an all-nighter for me."



"FATE OF ATLANTIS RESURRECTED INDY'S HARD-WON GAMING MORTALITY TO CREATE FURTHER TENSION FOR THE PLAYER, IN THE SPIRIT OF THE KNIFE-EDGE SUSPENSE OF A JONES FLICK"

As with all LucasArts graphic adventures, the visual design was an important consideration, and Hal and his team worked tirelessly to ensure that the final product looked truly stunning. The 16-colour visuals of *Last Crusade* pale in comparison to the beautifully atmospheric hand-drawn VGA artwork of the PC version of *Fate Of Atlantis*. The epic scope of the game, with its myriad locations spanning Iceland, Guatemala, Algeria, Crete, and Atlantis itself, created a huge workload for the LucasArts graphic designers. "Our artists, Bill Eaken in particular, were good at putting together a 'Mediterranean' style, kind of like Mediterranean cuisine; a little of this, a little of that. Knossos and Mycenaean Greece were the main inspirations, but there's some Mayan stuff in there, too."

Art director Bill Eaken was also behind the game's classic box cover, inspired by the iconic artwork of the veteran movie-poster artist Drew Struzan.

From an art-direction perspective, the game would turn out to be the last of its kind for LucasArts. "I'm still irritated by the fact that we did everything right on the computer (with preliminary paper sketches, of course)," acknowledges Hal. "Scanners were new and cost $5,000 back then, and company management dithered about getting the right deal until it was too late for my project. *Fate* was the last pixel-paint project at LucasArts for PCs." A massive undertaking, even by modern standards, the game's quota of around 120 separate locations and set pieces deserves credit; it's one of the largest of all the LucasArts adventures. Particular standouts include the multi-screen scrolling backgrounds depicting Knossos (where Indy struggles to find the entrance to the Labyrinth with the help of a surveyor's sextant), a Saharan archaeological dig site, a Nazi U-boat, and the atmospheric, ringed Lost City of the game's climax.

Fate is also notable for being the first LucasArts title to feature full rotoscoped in-game character animation. "We got out a video camera and shot Steve Purcell (the creator of *Sam & Max*) to walk and whip for Indy, and my lead animator, Collette Michaud (now Steve's wife) to do the same for Sophia,"

» Iceland: Not as cold as Sophia's comeback.





THE MAKING OF…

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS



» You'll need to tackle this 'Worldstone' puzzle at several points in the game.

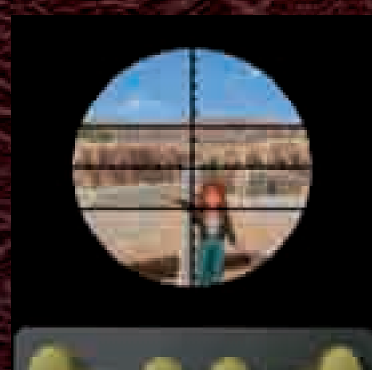
"AT THE TIME OF FATE'S RELEASE, ANY NEW INDY GAME FROM LUCASFILM WAS SURE TO CREATE A CERTAIN LEVEL OF HIGH-PROFILE INTEREST FROM FANS AND THE MEDIA, ESPECIALLY WITH THE CINEMATIC RELEASE OF LAST CRUSADE STILL FRESH IN PEOPLE'S MINDS"

explains Hal. "Then we projected the frames on a screen, and Collette drew pixels over them. Crude, but effective."

Hal's role as project leader extended to overseeing all aspects of the game that made it to the floppy release, encompassing script creation and editing, game design, and art direction. In fact, pretty much the only aspect he wasn't involved in was casting and recording the voice actors for the PC CD-ROM 'talkie' version. "If it had been a movie, I would have been intimately involved. But by the time we turned it into the company's first real talkie, I was off on another project, and all the voice stuff was in other hands. Some of it is good [Doug Jones' Indy was particularly well received by fans], but it was a pioneering effort, and some of the casting and voice direction left me cold, especially the sneering attitude of the villains."

At the time of *Fate*'s release, any new *Indiana Jones* game from the Lucasfilm stable was sure to create a certain level of high-profile interest from fans and the media, especially with the cinematic release of *Last Crusade* still fresh in people's minds. But with a completely original premise rather than a direct film licence, was Hal ever worried about matching the popularity of *Last Crusade* (the graphic adventure), or competing with in-house titles like Ron Gilbert's *Monkey Island*? "I wanted to at least equal the success of *Last Crusade*," he admits. "I wasn't worried about *Monkey Island* in the least, because it was still in production when I started, and it was a comedy game instead of a melodrama. As it happened, commercially, *Fate Of Atlantis* topped them all. By the time of *Fate* we worked in 256 colours (a first at LucasArts), could do quasi-3D movement, and *Fate* was the first fully voiced game we ever made." Indeed, a million-unit seller, the game remains one of LucasArts' most successful and best-loved graphic adventures.

Retro Gamer wonders how the final product compares to Hal's personal vision when he started on the project, and whether any story or game ideas ended up on the cutting-room floor, so to speak. "Endless compromises, but no cuts that I remember," says Hal. "We were changing publishers as *Fate* neared the finish line, and I was given a couple of months to polish and kill the last few bugs, an opportunity I cherish and never had again." With regards to the finished product, Hal still has a healthy degree of respect for *Fate*



» A sextant's-eye view of your glamorous sidekick.

INDIANA JONES and the VIDEOGAMING ODYSSEY

Selected highlights from the gaming archives of the 'original' tomb raider



RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (1982) Atari 2600

Howard Warshaw's VCS version of the quintessential *Indy* flick may look laughable these days, but it was one of the earliest successful film-licensed games, and this binary quest for the Lost Ark was a well-received hit. For Howard, *Raiders* was a mixed blessing. It impressed Steven Spielberg enough to request he adapt an *ET* videogame, and the rest, sadly for Atari, is history…



INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM (1985) Arcade

Atari's first and only *Jones* arcade licence is best remembered for its re-creation of the movie's mine-cart chase sequence. The rest of the game is a simplistic, but fun, platformer that sees Indy rescuing kidnapped children, retrieving the Sankara Stones, and crossing the perilous rope bridge for the showdown with the evil Mola Ram.



INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE: THE GRAPHIC ADVENTURE (1989) Various

The first LucasArts *Jones* adventure is a great example of how to nail down a licence. Developed in tandem with the film, which it lovingly re-creates, it also includes a few scenes that didn't make the movie, such as a chase through the scaffolds of the Zeppelin. It's not perfect, but it's a darn sight better than the *Last Crusade* action game…



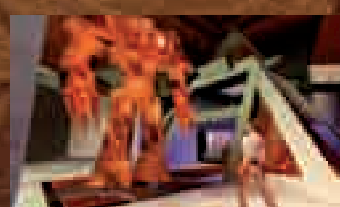
INDIANA JONES' GREATEST ADVENTURES (1994) SNES

Similar in style to the *Super Star Wars* series, this game gave its developer, Factor 5, the task of condensing the entire movie trilogy into a SNES cartridge. And the results are surprisingly good, with 28 varied stages playing like a fusion of *Pitfall II* and the *Castlevania* series, while retaining much of the atmosphere of the films.



INDIANA JONES AND THE IRON PHOENIX (Unreleased)

A proposed post-war sequel to *Fate Of Atlantis*, it would have followed Indy to South America on a mission to prevent a group of Nazis resurrecting the Führer. Hal reveals that the project was canned by LucasArts when it realised that the subject matter wouldn't have gone down well in Germany, one of the company's key sales territories…

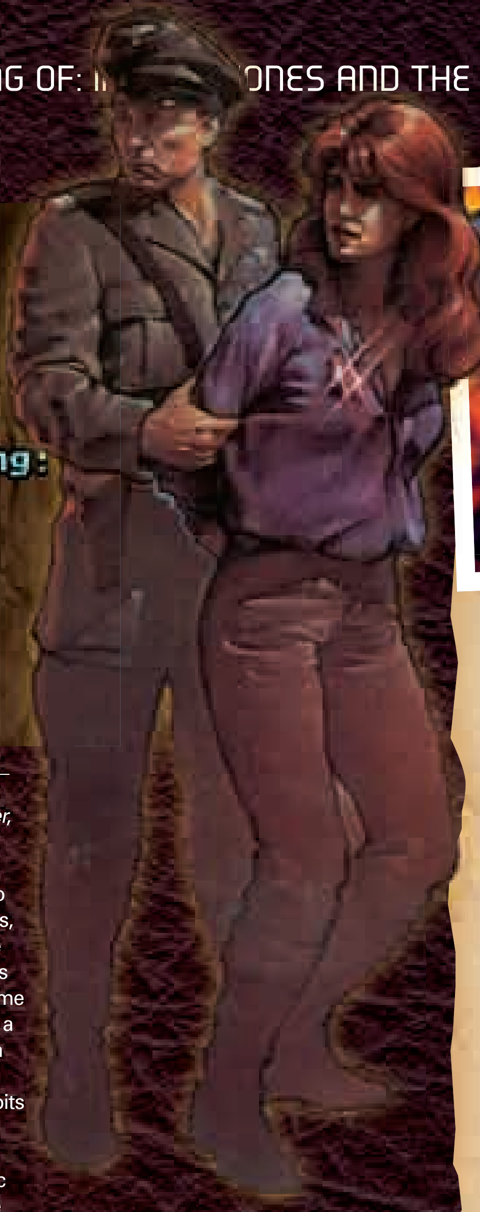


INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE (1999) PC, N64

Hal's final LucasArts *Jones*-licence combined the successful *Tomb Raider* formula with its original source of inspiration, spawning an enjoyable, if flawed, 3D romp. *Infernal Machine* was Indy's first post-war gaming adventure, and its plot, featuring Soviet agents and the return of *Fate Of Atlantis*'s Sophia Hapgood, is its strongest suite.



» Well it sure ain't Atlantis, but it's a start.

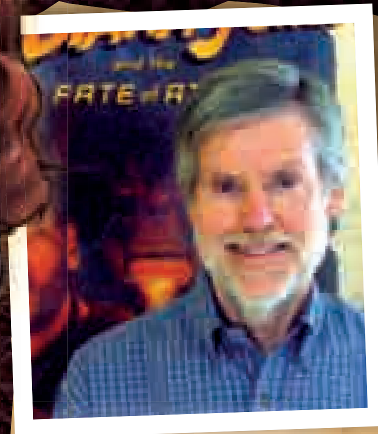


Of Atlantis, despite a few reservations about the obvious shortcomings of a 15-year-old game. "It's painful to look at these days, because the art for modern games has become so sophisticated, stylish and detailed," he admits. "Voice acting has likewise made huge leaps. I imagine that looking back on that period is like movie makers looking back on silent films. Historically intriguing, but painful. On the other hand, allowing for the state of the art of the time, yes, I am proud of it." We propose that the game's thoughtful plot would have made a rather good film. "I'm glad you think so," responds Hal, "but George and Steven would never consider a movie plot for Jones that wasn't original."

In total, the development of *Fate Of Atlantis* took around two years, from Hal's arrival at LucasArts in early 1990 to the game's release in mid 1992. Following the completion of *Fate*, Hal remained with the company, working again as a project leader on a further two *Jones* titles (*Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures* and *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*) and the SNES action game *Big Sky Trooper*, before leaving in 2003 to revive his freelance media and game design consultancy, Finite Arts. In 2007, and to the excitement of many adventure fans, it was announced that Hal would once again be teaming up with ex-LucasArts colleague Noah Falstein, for the first time since the *Atlantis* days, and producing a new PC graphic adventure for German publisher, Anaconda Games. The new game, *Mata Hari*, is based on the exploits of the infamous Dutch spy.

"Mata Hari was a Dutch beauty who made her name as a scandalous exotic dancer just about a century ago, in the years leading up to World War I," says Hal. "She became a spy, botched her assignments, was caught by the French, and executed. Because she was already notorious, and because her spying involved her womanly wiles, her sad story has reverberated down through the years. Our game proposes that she was actually such a good spy that her real exploits have never come to light. We're offering players the chance to improve on history, to perfect Mata Hari."

It's hard not to wish them well on their intimate, but promising, venture to revive a much-loved, but long-thought unprofitable, genre. Although Hal admits that the new game, with its two-man script-writing team and independent publisher, can't hope to emulate big-budget productions like *Fate Of Atlantis*, the veteran duo's cumulative industry experience, and proven story-building record means they deserve another bite of the graphic-adventure apple.



ADVENTURES IN SCREENWRITING

Lengthy stints as a player in both the games and movie industry furnished Hal Barwood with some unique insider perspective on the creative complexities of both art forms, which he is happy to share with **RG**. "Movies are a heavily compressed form of drama," he explains. "Weeks or years of story get crunched down into two hours. A screenwriter must wring all the fluff out. Games are like long Russian novels, you're forced to write three or four times more dialogue. If I'm watching a movie, and I barely understand what Jones is up to or how he manages to wriggle out of some tight spot, who cares, the movie will end anyway, and I'll walk out of the theatre happy. In a game, if I fail to understand an important story point, I probably won't figure out some devilish trap and the game will never end. Players are our stars, and take on the responsibilities of the screen actors we admire."

"Making a movie can be compared to a stagecoach ride in the Old West," Hal continues. "At first you hope for a pleasant journey, but eventually you just want to get there. Building games is like that times ten. At least while making a movie you're in the company of experts. Games were (and still are) an immature form; not everyone on a team is expert at his work. Frustration is the main emotion. Another difficulty is variation. Conversations in a game can occur in multiple ways, under multiple circumstances, with multiple outcomes. Writing all that similar but different chatter that fills a game is completely unlike screenwriting, and it's damned hard work!"

» The Azores: Another country, another crackpot…



Families Reunited

STUART CAMPBELL COMES FROM A LONG AND COMPLICATED LINE OF ANCESTORS WHO CONTRIBUTED THEIR GENES TO THE UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL WE ALL KNOW AND LOVE TODAY. BUT HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE

It's easy to get irritable when videogame journalists excitably acclaim the stunning 'originality' of games which have supposedly appeared out of nowhere, but about which anyone who knows anything about games knows otherwise. (The most celebrated – if that's the right word – example of recent years would be *Worms*, recipient of all sorts of originality awards despite being the latest in a 20-year-old line encompassing scores of previous games which play in the same way. The first example your correspondent knows of is *Artillery Duel* on the ColecoVision in 1983, but the genre may well go back further still.)

But sometimes that ire is unwarranted, because some games are so obscure that it's only by sheer luck that anyone would even have heard of them, far less be able to identify that they were the estranged parent or illegitimate child of a better-known classic. Count on the dauntlessly diligent descendant-detectives of **Retro Gamer**, then, to uncover some of the missing links and finally bring together some of gaming's greats and their grand-relatives.





CASE FILE #1 – CHUCKIE EGG

Chuckie Egg is one of retro gaming's cornerstones. Alongside the *Donkey Kong*s and the *Manic Miner*s and the *Stunt Car Racer*s and the *Speedball 2*s, Nigel Alderton's high-speed henhouse runaround still represents many people's ideal for the form, with its slick controls and non-stop action. Surprisingly few games, though, have actually replicated its style – not even its own sequel played similarly, being a comparatively staid and sprawling arcade adventure. The only game that can truly lay claim to *Chuckie Egg*'s DNA is *Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure*.

Despite this reporter's single-handed trumpet-blowing crusade over the last decade, the number of people who've heard of this early platformer for the mono Game Boy is still, taken as an average and rounded off to the nearest whole number, zero. Which is a tragedy, because it's simply one of the greatest platform games of all time. Comprising 50 single-screen levels spread across ten worlds, it's a riot of invention and pace with something new on almost every stage. But telltale signs like its speed, ladder-jumping and infinite-fall ability mark it out as a clear homage to Alderton's game, with one of the most obvious tributes being the appearance in World 5 of a version of *Chuckie Egg*'s 'super duck', which tracks the player across the level regardless of the platform structures.

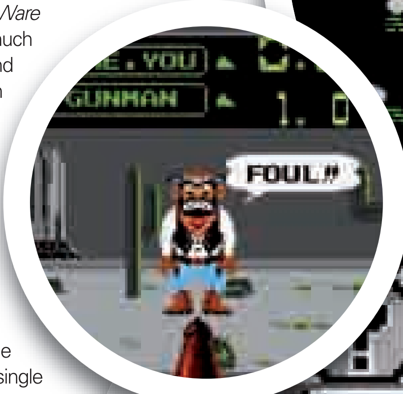
Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure takes *Chuckie Egg*'s ball and runs like the wind with it, leaving the tiny world of the farmyard behind for the boundless entirety of time and space, and the gameplay horizons broaden accordingly. While it never breaks from the basic 'run and jump and collect stuff' template, you never know quite what's going to happen on each new level – you'll be chased through paradise by relentless angels and teleporting monks, stages will turn invisible, walls and floors and keys appear and disappear, enemies pick you up and drop you off the edges of platforms, some throw boulders or grenades, rabbits roll deadly Easter eggs, other enemies shoot you with guns or with time-shift bolts that send you back to the level's start position, and that's not the half of it. Just like *Chuckie Egg*, some levels are edgy sniping battles where you pick off a key here and a key there while some are flat-out headlong sprints, but none will take you more than 30 seconds to play through once you master them.

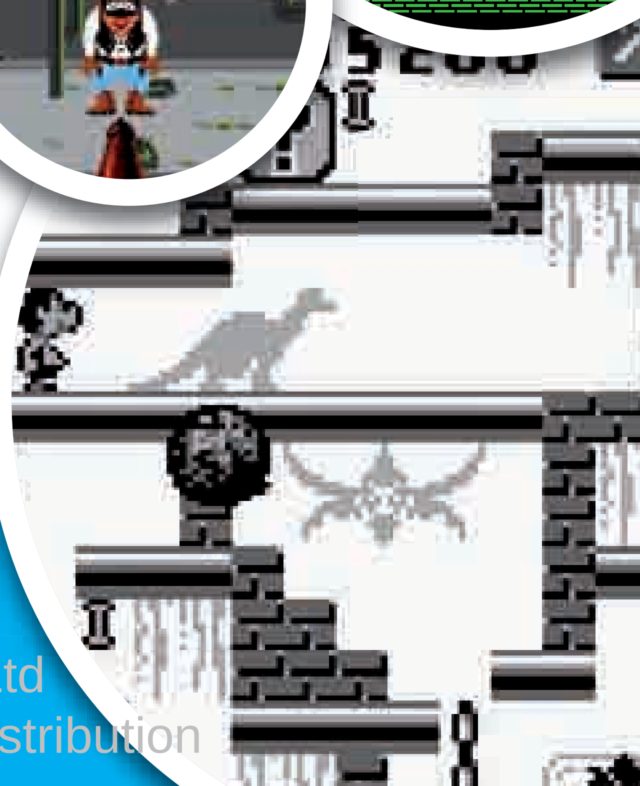
In fact, *Bill & Ted's* proves to be the missing link between one of gaming's oldest standards and one of its newest pioneers. Because with its constant change, instant accessibility, breathless pace and endless invention and unpredictability, you only need to continue the logical line from *Chuckie Egg* through *Bill & Ted's* and keep going until you eventually arrive at *WarioWare*.

Squished into a tiny 128K cart, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Game Boy Adventure* had to be endlessly creative with a very small number of elements. But take away that restriction – *WarioWare* had 64 times as much RAM to play around with – and you can refine those levels down from 20 seconds and ten seconds to five and three and one, twisting and bending and distorting them into crazy shapes while sticking to the same 'D-pad and single button' controls that made *Chuckie Egg* so instantly appealing. And you 'hen't' say fairer than that! *(That's it. Get my gun – Ed).*



Along with *Lode Runner*, *Chuckie Egg* is a contender for the game to have appeared on the most formats ever.





In fact, they could quite reasonably have called the game *"Bill And Ted's EGGS-cellent Adventure"*!!!!!!!!!!! *(Get out – Ed)*

Families Reunited

CASE FILE #2 – THE TRAIN GAME

Beyond any rational doubt, Sega's *The Typing Of The Dead* is the funniest game ever made. It's based on Sega's classic arcade lightgun shooter *The House Of The Dead 2*, a game which – while cheesy – is also tense, atmospheric and in parts really quite scary. But by the simple expedient of replacing your gun with a keyboard and some random words, it suddenly becomes impossible to be disturbed by even the goriest assaults, or to react with anything other than a warm chuckle as a gruesome monster from under the sea jams a trident between your ribs when you fail to type "Make me a humble apology" or "Tell me a funny story" sufficiently quickly at it to deflect its savage attack.

But this feature isn't here to talk about how great *The Typing Of The Dead* is (which is to say, *amazingly* great), but rather to identify its videogaming parentage. And unlikely as it seems, the only game (other than *HOTD 2*, obviously) to which *TTOTD* owes a genetic debt is a long-forgotten title from the early days of the Spectrum about points management and maintaining customer satisfaction on a railway network.

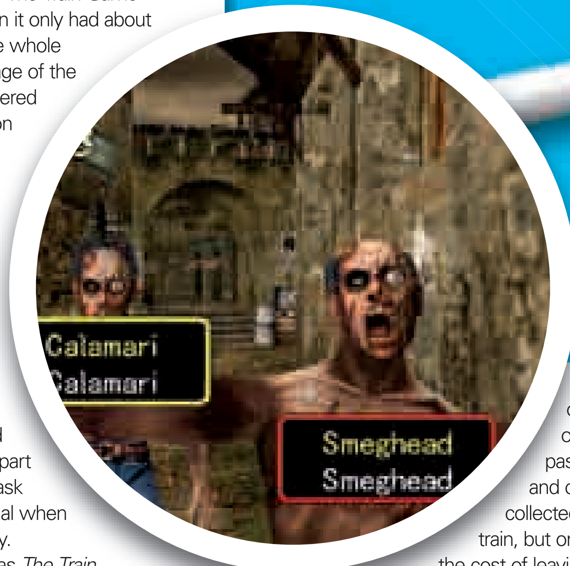
Microsphere's 1983 classic *The Train Game* wasn't a smash hit even when it only had about 50 other Speccy games in the whole world to contend with. In an age of the exciting new opportunities offered by the Speccy's high-resolution colour graphics, the barely beyond-ASCII visuals didn't seize gamers' attention. Even those of us still mired in more medieval times, playing our games on black-and-white bedroom TVs, couldn't enjoy it either because a large part of the gameplay was focused on colour-matching the various trains to their passengers, and telling seven shades of grey apart on a 14-inch portable was a task of distinctly limited fun potential when there was *Manic Miner* to play.

Which is a terrible shame, as *The Train Game* is completely brilliant. It's a frantic mix of complex spatial awareness, fast reactions and multiple forward planning as the player tries to keep up to a mind-melting four simultaneous trains running around one of two small railways (there were two different track layouts for the game, one on each side of the cassette). The aim was to collect colour-coded commuters from three stations before they flew into an explosive rage at being excessively delayed and cost you one of your four lives (which were also forfeited in the event of trains running into closed points, crashing into each other, or having points switched while the train was travelling across them).

The trains couldn't stop (except at stations, and only then for a fixed brief period), couldn't pick up passengers of other colours than their own (except the angry ones who'd turned white, who took precedence over all other passengers and could be collected by any train, but only at the cost of leaving any waiting passengers of the train's own colour behind on the platform), and couldn't be reversed. Each set of points could be set to two positions only, meaning that if you wanted to make a train reach a certain station, you'd often have to route it through a long and complex diversion in order to make it travel in the opposite direction down the line it was currently on. Oh, and sometimes, at the highest of the game's seven difficulty levels, a hurtling runaway goods train would appear and have to be sent into one of the tunnels at the side of the screen to get rid of it. Man, you kids today have it real easy.

But this feature isn't here to go on and on about how great *The Train Game* is (which is to say, *amazingly* great), but rather to identify its connection to *The Typing Of The Dead*, and your correspondent is sure that the intelligent, alert readers of **Retro Gamer** have spotted at least the obvious half of it already. Off the top of your reporter's knowledge-filled head, these are the only two videogames ever created (with the exception of later spin-offs like *Typing Space Harrier*, and obviously discounting

"THE TRAIN GAME INSPIRED AT LEAST ONE MORE-OBVIOUS CLONE, IN THE FORM OF THE SUPERFICIALLY SIMILAR LOCOMOTION, BUT IT'S ONLY THE TYPING OF THE DEAD THAT PLAYS THE SAME WAY AS ITS PARENT"



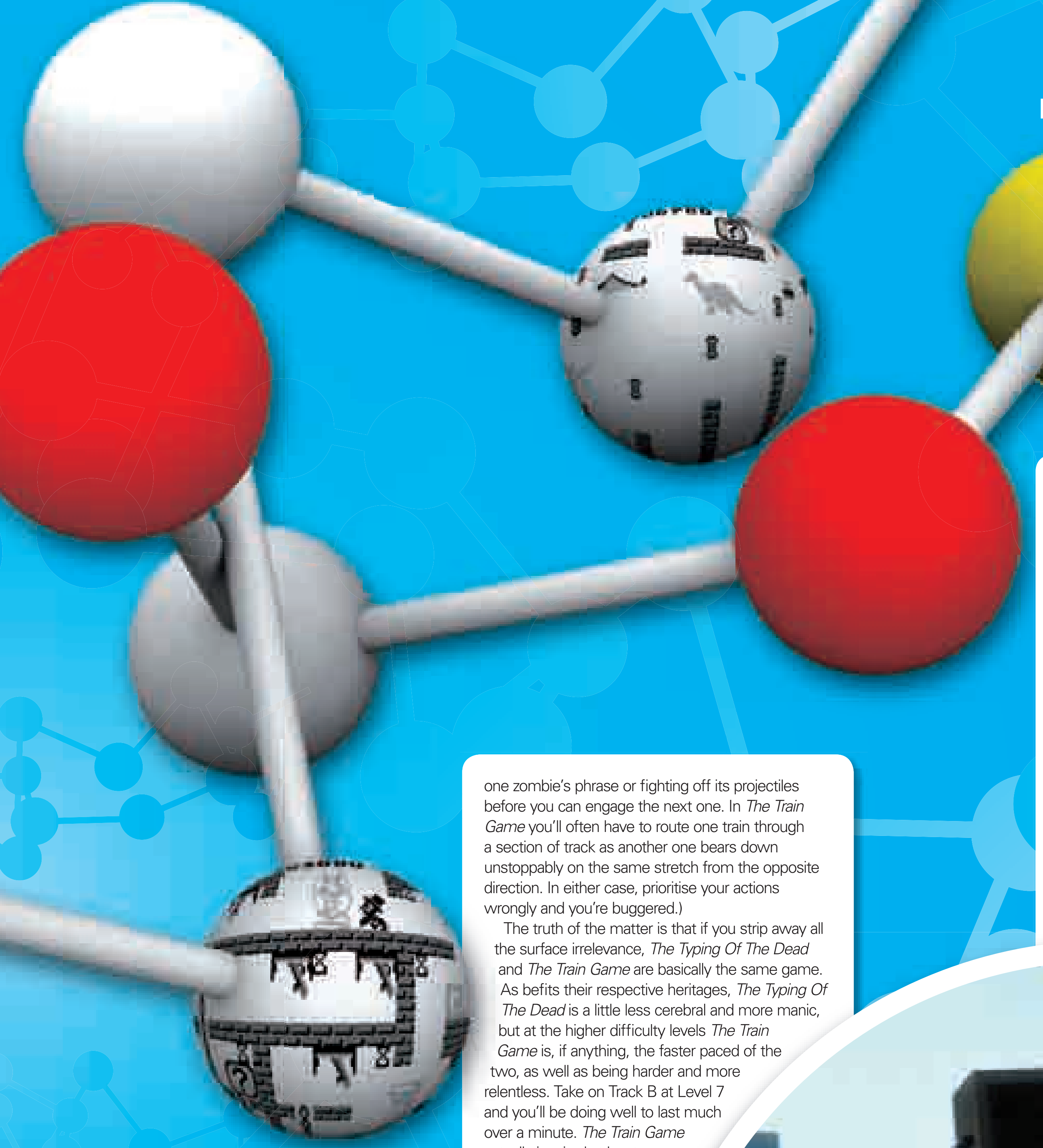
▼The undead are particularly enraged by old *Red Dwarf* references.



The words you have to type aren't usually descriptive. We just got lucky here.



◀The seeming dead ends are actually tunnels.



specifically educational software) in which the primary gameplay skill is intimate familiarity with the layout of the QWERTY keyboard. But there's a bit more to it than that.

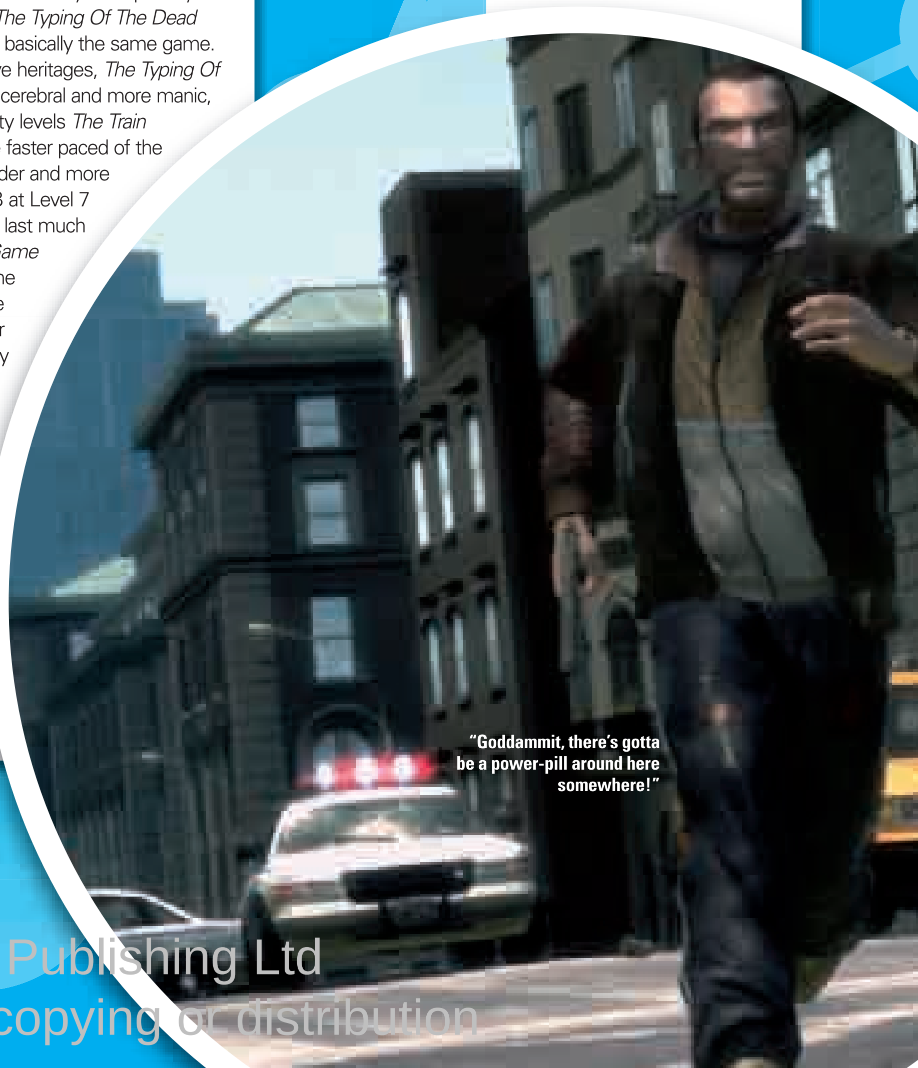
Both *The Train Game* and *The Typing Of The Dead*, in essence, are not only about typing skill, but about threat management. Most of the time, in either game, you'll have two or three pressing problems to deal with at any given moment, and not only do you have to deal with them all, you'll have to near-instantly assess their relative urgency and deal with them all *in the right order*. In both games, in fact, it's often necessary to solve one problem purely to be able to solve the second at all. (In *The Typing Of The Dead* you have to completely finish typing one zombie's phrase or fighting off its projectiles before you can engage the next one. In *The Train Game* you'll often have to route one train through a section of track as another one bears down unstoppably on the same stretch from the opposite direction. In either case, prioritise your actions wrongly and you're buggered.)

The truth of the matter is that if you strip away all the surface irrelevance, *The Typing Of The Dead* and *The Train Game* are basically the same game. As befits their respective heritages, *The Typing Of The Dead* is a little less cerebral and more manic, but at the higher difficulty levels *The Train Game* is, if anything, the faster paced of the two, as well as being harder and more relentless. Take on Track B at Level 7 and you'll be doing well to last much over a minute. *The Train Game* actually inspired at least one more-obvious clone, in the form of German developer Kingsoft's superficially very similar *Locomotion* for the Amiga in 1992 (a fine game in its own right, which replaced the typing-based point switching with mouse-controlled cursor-pointing), but it's only *The Typing Of The Dead* that plays the same way as its parent.

Only one of them's funny, though.

GRAND THEFT OTOBOKE

You all know about how Rockstar famously revealed in a magazine that the *GTA* games (originally meant to be more tellingly called *Race 'N' Chase*) were derived from *Pac-Man*, don't you? With the obvious parallels between the overhead-viewed cities of the original 2D games and Namco's maze-running classic? (Interestingly, you were also originally supposed to be able to choose to play as the police, making the original *GTA* the parent in turn of *Pac-Man VS* – see, the DNA always makes its way through in the end.) Because it'll save us a lot of time later on.



"Goddammit, there's gotta be a power-pill around here somewhere!"

Families Reunited

CASE FILE #3 – THE PIT

The last game we're going to look at is a much-overlooked classic, but one that's already been touched on in the pages of **Retro Gamer** – Centuri's 1982 coin-op *The Pit*, the game that gave birth to *Boulder Dash*. (Gave birth to *Boulder Dash* at the scandalously young age of two, in fact – the latter game having been released in 1984 – but let's just skip over that alarming and disturbing fact for the sake of decency and move swiftly on.)

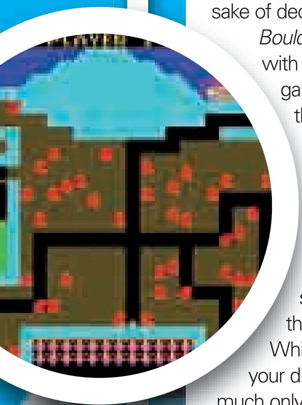
Boulder Dash is most commonly associated with the two classic earth-shifting arcade games *Dig Dug* and *Mr Do!*, but beyond the underground setting it has almost nothing in common with either title. *Dig Dug* and *Mr Do!* are both fundamentally about battling your enemies, not negotiating your environment. There are no obstacles in your way, and the rocks/apples which can fall down the screen are really there as weapons rather than dangers. *The Pit* is different, though. While there are enemy characters chasing your diamond-hunting miner, they're pretty much only a distraction. It's perfectly simple for even a slightly skilled player to conduct the first few seconds of any level in such a way (illustrated in the screenshot at the bottom of the page) that the claw-wielding baddies are confined to a small space at the upper centre of the pit, well away from anywhere the player needs to go.

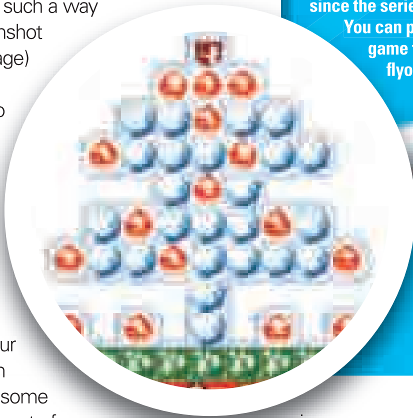
Your problem in *The Pit* is – just like in *Boulder Dash* – chiefly to navigate your way safely around each level in order to collect some diamonds and then get out of the exit without having a rock fall on your head. (Also, like *Boulder Dash*, you don't actually have to collect all of a level's diamonds, but there are temptingly large bonuses for picking up more than the minimum.) There are walls, bottlenecks, rooms and environmental hazards, as well as the liberal scattering of rocks that constitutes the core gameplay element of both titles.

The similarities don't end there, though. For one thing, your miner doesn't just plough through earth like in *Dig Dug* and *Mr Do!*. To make a tunnel, he blasts away a square of space with his, um, anti-dirt laser, then pauses for a moment before moving into the gap. (This is very much a character-block-centred game, which makes it all the weirder that nobody ever converted it to the Speccy. There were unofficial ports to the VIC-20 and the Commodore 64 though, one of the very few advantages of the CBM machines over the rubber-keyed wonder.) The skilled player, however, can use this behaviour to take out a square of earth and then quickly move off in a different direction, in a manner very akin to the *Boulder Dash* trick of holding down the fire button to dig/push/pick up something without moving into its space. In both games, it's a subtle play mechanic that separates the novice player from the expert.

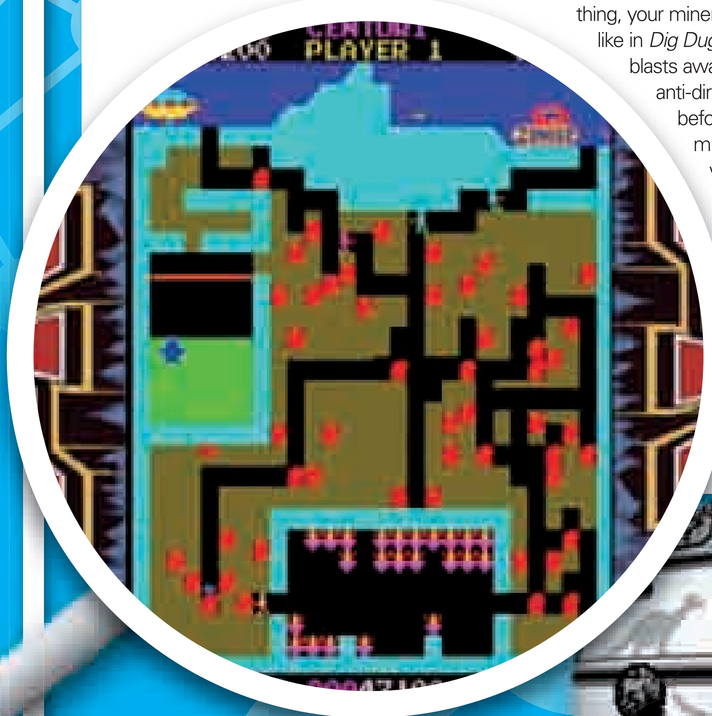
And finally, there's the behaviour of the enemy characters. The little grab-robots don't actually chase you – like all the moving enemies in *Boulder Dash*, they follow fixed movement patterns (if there's a space below, go down, if you can't go down go left, and so on) and only kill you if you get very close to them, at which point they leap on you and smash you. And as in *Boulder Dash*, they can only move in existing tunnels – they can't dig their own. And yet despite all this – their slow pace, limited abilities, lack of weaponry, rigidly dictated movement and non-vindictive nature, you'll really come to hate the little sods. (Maybe it's the way there's a brief but violent struggle when one attacks you, a bit like in *Maziacs* but with the crucial difference that you never ever win. It looks like a brutal way to die.)

If you want to see where it all ultimately led, check out the superb *Boulder Dash Xmas 2002 Edition*, which is the finest *Boulder Dash* game ever (playable for free online, or with a full-featured downloadable version for about 11 quid). Or *Gran Turismo 5*, of course. See you next time, viewers!

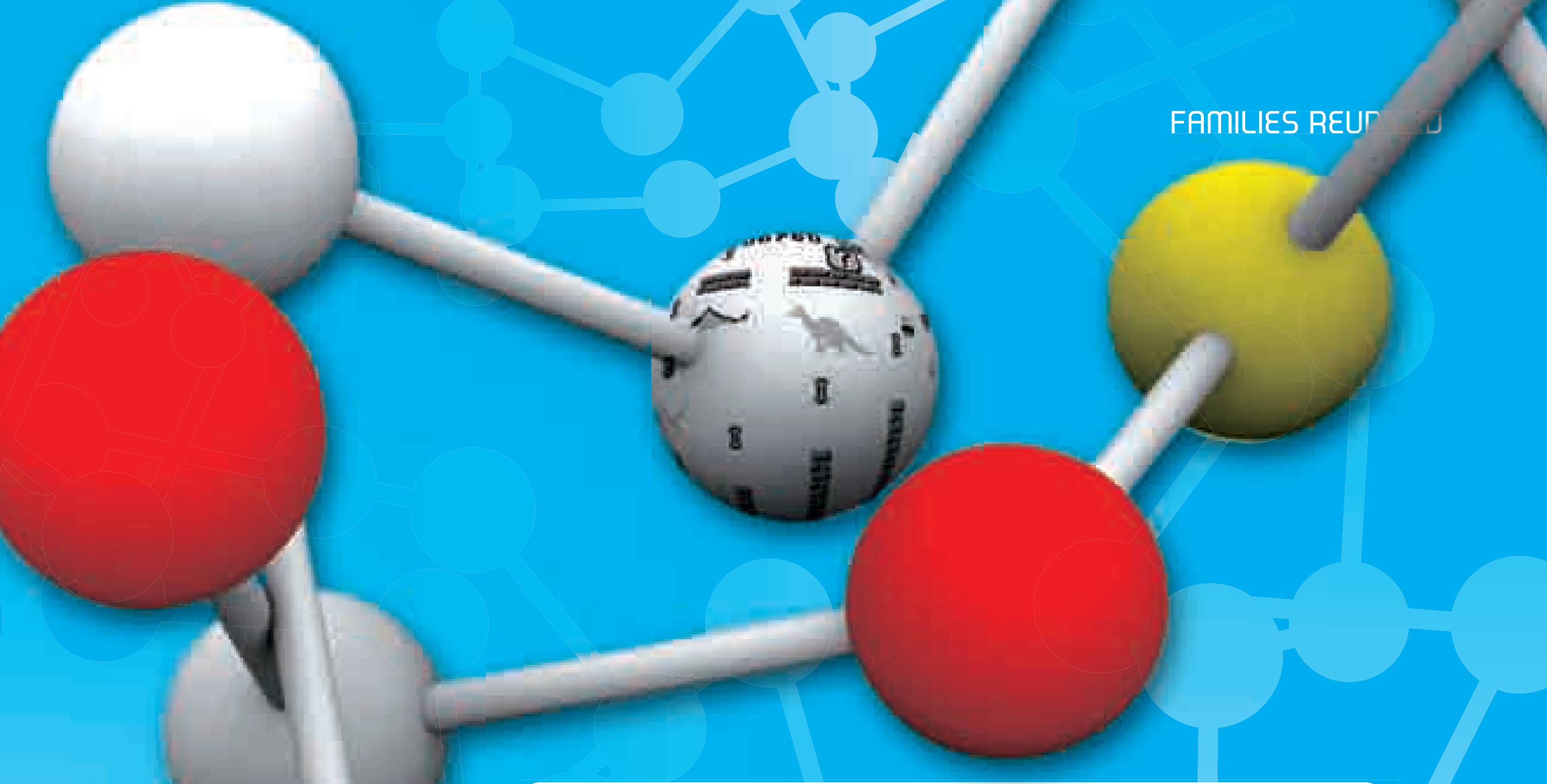




◀ This innocent first level might not look exciting, but *Boulder Dash Xmas 2002 Edition* is the finest collection of brilliantly fiendish *BD* levels since the series was invented. You can play the full game for free at www.flyordie.com.



▲ Here you've managed to block off all the pink and blue enemy robots' paths with rocks, and since they lack any digging ability they can't get to you at all.





HANG ON A MINUTE

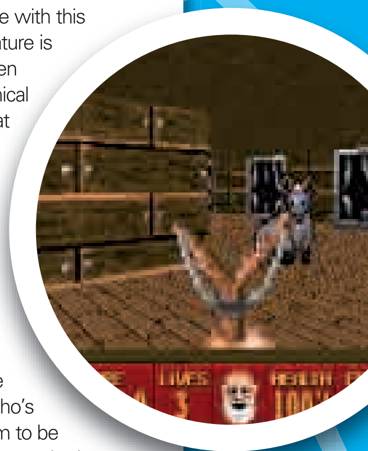
"What the hell was that about Gran Turismo 5?" – Bemused reader, Essex

Ah yes. The thing is, like many parents in today's shamefully immoral society, *The Pit* had more than one offspring to more than one partner. Y'see, the use of the phrase "any level" back in the opening paragraphs of *The Pit*'s entry is a slight misnomer. The game only has two different screens, actually the same one except for rock placement, which alternate at an ever-increasing pace until everything happens at blinding speed and becomes as much a test of memory as reflex. The enemies are largely incidental, pursuing their own path regardless of what you do and only causing you trouble if you actively collide with them. Sound familiar at all?

The Pit is all about racing the same circular courses (you start and finish in the same spot) over and over, doing 'laps' around them until you find the line that's both fastest and avoids the pre-programmed enemy AI. As it goes on, you know exactly what to do and when, but sometimes your fingers just aren't quick enough or co-ordinated enough to perform the actions your brain's telling them to. Sometimes you panic and crash because you're short of time. Sometimes one mistake will force you to significantly amend your route and improvise a new *ad hoc* one, as it brings you perilously close to opponents you should have avoided. It doesn't look like a driving game, but in every meaningful sense that's exactly what it is, and, in particular, highly rigid and technical ones like the *GT* series.

Videogamers have a lot of trouble with this concept, but it's what the entire feature is about. No matter what the on-screen graphics depict, the simple mechanical fact of playing *any* videogame is that you're pressing left and right and fire to move blobs of coloured light around a screen. It doesn't matter if the game world nominally exists in two dimensions or three, whether you're viewing it from above or to the side or out of your character's 'eyes' or whatever – you're still just pressing left and right and fire on the joypad to move the lights around. To an observer who's standing behind your telly, you seem to be doing the exact same things no matter whether you're playing *Tetris* or *Call Of Duty 4*, and that's because you are.

Fundamental gameplay concepts have nothing to do with either graphical style or game setting. It's hard to imagine two more diverse things than, say, the story of Noah preserving the world's animal species in the Ark and a heroic soldier invading a Nazi fortress to kill a massive cyborg Hitler. Yet the exact same game engine and gameplay concepts were used for both *Super Noah's Ark 3D* and *Wolfenstein 3D* on the SNES. They're basically the same game dressed in different clothes, and it shouldn't take a big mental leap to grasp that this fact – pretty obvious in the case of *Super Noah's Ark* and *Wolfenstein 3D* – extends between things that look a lot more dissimilar. Don't let your eyes fool you, chums. If you ever want to truly understand games, be they retro or ultra-modern, you need to get your heads around that idea.



▲ **Feeding animals on a boat: a lot like shooting Nazis in a castle. And, of course, *The Pit* is a lot more fun than *Gran Turismo*.**

▼ **I don't know if I can stay awake long enough to write a caption for this pict… zzzzzz.**

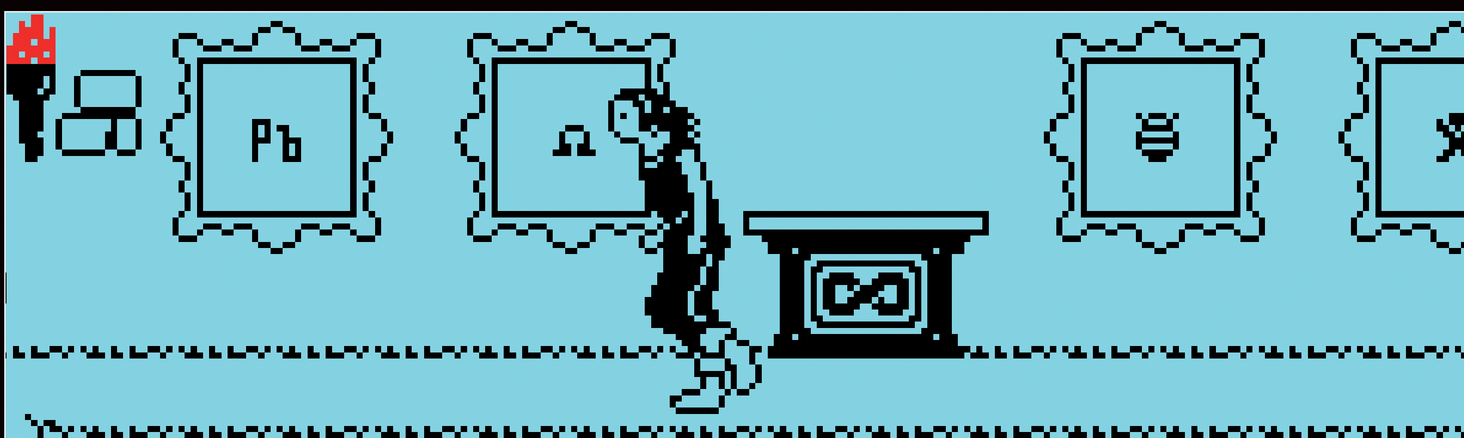


THE CLASSIC GAME

DUN DARACH

David Crookes grabs a much-needed map and revisits one of gaming's most secret, ancient and sprawling cities





If you think tramping the streets of your nearest town or city is quite heavy on your feet, then spare a thought for Cuchulainn the Great. With his head down, his back arched, and wearing a pair of big boots, he pounds the ground with purpose in a sprawling metropolis that would blister the most experienced of feet.

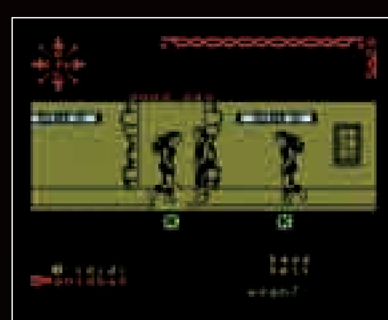
Dun Darach is difficult. Difficult to say, to get into, to work out. You walk left, then right. A brick wall appears in front of you and a path leads up or down and yet you stand there, long hair sitting restfully on your shoulders working out what to do. It's not long before you realise it's time to pick up the manual and have a read. And then you still have to have a finger ready to scratch your head.

For those who'd played *Tir Na Nog*, there was an air of familiarity with *Dun Darach*, not least because it was the prequel to that classic title, albeit released a year later. And where *Tir Na Nog* broke fresh ground with its large central character and parallax scrolling, *Dun Darach* followed. It may have dispensed of the parallax scrolling, but it continued with the Celtic folklore upon which *TNN* was based, leaving Gargoyle Games with another landmark title, one that received 90% in *Amstrad Action* and a whopping 97% in *Crash*.

It was the Amstrad CPC, which introduced us to the ancient city of *Dun Darach*, rather belatedly in 1987, two years after it had been released. And only recently, 21 years on, have we learned that 'dun darach' is Celtic for 'oak fort', a name that would nowadays fit quite neatly on the outside of a little cottage in Ireland. But there was little that was quaint about the *Dun Darach* of the videogaming world, especially as Cuchulainn had found himself in this vast maze of streets, houses and shops out of a pure necessity to defeat evil. In some ways, he could count himself lucky he was able to embark on the task of rescuing his charioteer Loeg, who had been imprisoned by the sorceress, Skar. In *Tir Na Nog*, he was dead.

For all the talk of a sorceress, of fantasy and defeating evil, *Dun Darach* was rather grounded. Loeg was effectively put behind bars because of lust, enticed from a refreshing drink with Cuchulainn by the beautiful Skar on the pretence that she owned a horse-drawn carriage that needed fixing. Skar had trapped Loeg in retribution for the earlier killing of Amhair, a prince of Cuchulainn's rival faction, Conachta. And this is why our hero had the pleasure of walking around a surprisingly diverse city.

One of the many joys of *Dun Darach* was the sub-quests, little puzzling elements that trod a traditional adventuring path of obtaining objects and handing them to others in return for other gifts that helped you achieve your overall aim. Whether you were in the financial, market or gambling areas, whether you were trying to prise information out of passers-by or trading with a shopkeeper, whether you were being pickpocketed or doing the robbing, *Dun Darach* had so much to do. There



» [Amstrad] A good day indeed with Kara and Keli around.

IN THE KNOW



- » **VERSION FEATURED:** AMSTRAD CPC/ZX SPECTRUM
- » **DEVELOPER:** GREG FOLLIS, ROY CARTER
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3



» [Amstrad] "C'mon, don't hang around, I'm dying for the loo."



» [ZX Spectrum] There are plenty of opportunities for shopping. Just make sure you have the cash.

is no doubting the fun at frittering your cash away or being able to stash it in a bank and earn interest. Here we had real life merging with the virtual world in an incredibly mature title, with everything except a brothel. And there was nearly one of those too, instead replaced by a sign that read 'Forbidden'.

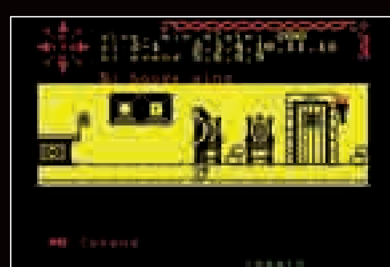
It's obvious that the game was a labour of love, a cliché perhaps, but one that is so true in this case. The sheer size of the game could have proved overwhelming. Instead, by popping a rough map of the city into the box and providing a wealth of information in the booklet, *Dun Darach* felt like a journey to a strange city. It's like the feeling you get as you read a guidebook on a cheap flight to a European city you've never visited before. Only this was more leisurely and comfortable with no risk of DVT.

On the ground, it could be just as confusing. To make life easier, there were street names on the sides of the buildings. You knew where you were as soon as you turned a corner and the doors were not only numbered, but nearly always unlocked (from the outside, at least). Rooms were easily accessed by pressing 'Enter' while in front of the door. And buying and selling made up a sizeable chunk of the gameplay, using your cash to buy items and being paid for goods that sales people wished to buy. Attempts to steal items by picking them up and walking out of the door sometimes worked. At other times, the door would lock and you'd be trapped until your hand entered your pocket or you put the items back.

Looking at the perfect animation, the swishing long hair, the large characters, the stamina needed to keep going and the lack of death, this was a game that was ahead of its time, astonishingly so given it was made in 1985. Undoubtedly, the name would've put people off. And if it didn't, the sheer amount of time needed to get your head around what you had to do and then plough on and do it could have killed any remaining enthusiasm. But no, *Dun Darach* was – is – one of the most involving games of all time. And it just cries out to be played.



» [ZX Spectrum] If all else fails, simply stand still and pull off a heroic pose. It always works for us.



» [Amstrad] Even the seedier side of town life is covered… do you fancy a flutter?

"WITH ITS PERFECT ANIMATION, LARGE CHARACTERS AND LACK OF DEATH, DUN DARACH WAS A GAME THAT WAS ASTONISHINGLY AHEAD OF ITS TIME"

THE MAP OF MAPS

Getting around *Dun Darach* without a map was near impossible. You either had to sketch your own or use one of the many guides printed in various computer game magazines in the mid-Eighties.

One of the best was this little beauty, printed in *Crash* magazine and designed by the supremely talented cult videogame artist Oliver Frey.

Looking like an ancient artefact, the highly detailed map listed every street in the city and it also positioned the location of each shop, deposit house, bank, gallery and gambling house.

It was possible to speedily get around the city using portals and these are also listed on Frey's map, as are the secret doors and the important Thieves Guild.

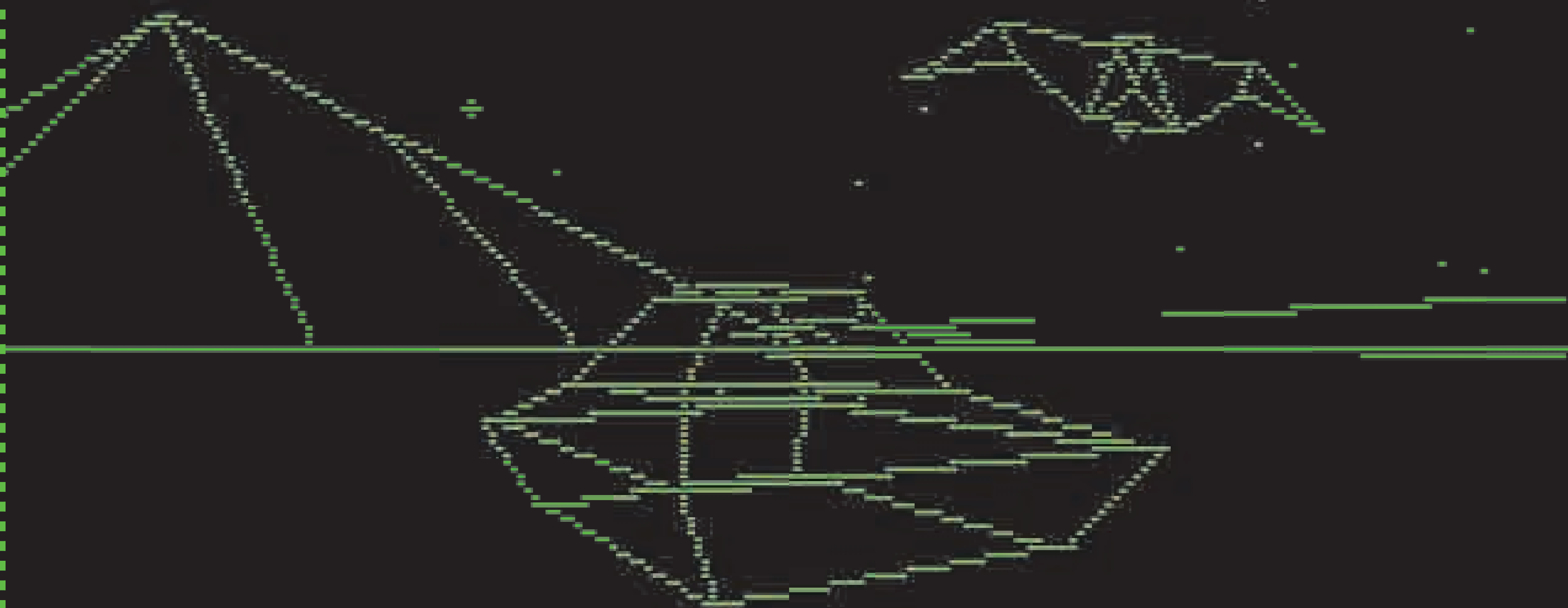
Oli Frey, as many regular **Retro Gamer** readers and retro enthusiasts know, worked for Newsfield, the publisher of classic gaming mags, *Crash* and *Zzap!64*.



THE MAKING OF...

STELLAR 7

Outgunning Atari's Battlezone on a humble Apple II is no mean feat, but back in 1982, not long out of his teens, Damon Slye did just that. Mike Bevan questions the Dynamix co-founder about his futuristic tank-busting debut, a game that even made a big impression on author Tom Clancy...



» [Apple II] A Laser Tank fires off-screen as a 'cloaked' Raven approaches.

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** DYNAMIX/PENGUIN SOFTWARE/US GOLD
- » **DEVELOPER:** DYNAMIX/DAMON SLYE
- » **RELEASED:** 1982 (APPLE II), 1983 (C64)
- » **PLATFORMS:** APPLE II, COMMODORE 64 (ORIGINAL), AMIGA, PC, MAC (REMAKE)
- » **GENRE:** 3D SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ARCTICFOX (1986), PROJECT FIRESTART (1989), RED BARON (1990), ACES OF THE PACIFIC (1992)



At a time when vector-driven games such as *Star Wars* and *Battlezone* were still big business in arcades, programmers were still struggling to accommodate fast true-vector graphics in games software running on home computers. The current 8-bit machines, with their limited capabilities and memory, required talented coding and know-how to produce fast, moving hi-res 3D visuals, with programmers of the era often having to make compromises. The 1983 Commodore 64 conversion of *Battlezone* used a combination of vectors and sprites to achieve its aims, resulting in a rather diluted experience compared to the arcade original. Step forward recent high-school graduate Damon Slye, an aspiring games designer with a precocious ability for throwing 3D wire-frame shapes around computer screens.

"I became interested in programming in my senior year of high school when we got an 8K Commodore PET in the science lab," remembers Damon. "I started writing little games for it in BASIC. Stuff like *Mastermind*, a *Star Trek* battle game, and one I invented that was a lot like the light-cycle portion of the Atari game *Tron* that came out much later." A promising start then, but, unknown to Damon, a third dimension of simulated computer graphics was waiting to be explored in his future career, and to get there he needed to lift the shroud on the inner workings of machine code.

"I read that the secret to writing fast programs was coding in assembly," recalls Damon. "I began reading the book *Programming The 6502*. I felt like I had a mystical tome with the secrets of the universe within, if only I could understand it. I remember that at my high-school graduation ceremony I was sitting in the bleachers hunched over that book, and ignored the speeches and the rest of the ceremony, though I did walk up to get my diploma when my name was called." An unusual stroke of luck would be the catalyst for the acquisition of Damon's first computer. "My grandfather won the trifecta at the horse races before I was born. He put some of the money into my college fund. After I graduated from high school I used that



» [C64] While we prefer the Apple II version, the C64 outing nevertheless is very, very good.





» [C64] Enemy hover-tank at 12 o'clock.

money to buy an Apple II. My parents didn't approve since the money was for college. But I was pretty obsessed. I knew I wanted to be a programmer."

It was at this point that Damon first happened upon a certain arcade tank game, the first coin-op title to allow true free-roaming play in three dimensions. The game was *Battlezone*, and it made a big impression on the teenaged Damon. "I remember one time I was playing it in a store, and someone I knew came up and said 'Why don't you do a game like that?' I said, 'That would be too hard!' I didn't know anything about 3D or vector graphics. There was a 3D graphics package out on the Apple II by Bruce Artwick, and he also released a flight simulator, but I don't recall any true 3D vector games on microcomputers back then. The challenge interested me."

"I became fascinated with 3D graphics," he continues. "I decided to write a 3D package and a game with I think she thought I was a bit odd. Maybe she was right. It sounds a bit crazy now as an adult."

A wonderful homage to its arcade inspiration, *Stellar 7* picks up where *Battlezone* left off and adds a host of new features, including multiple stages and diverse environments, varied enemies including aerial attackers, 'bosses', and the ability to 'cloak' your tank (the Raven) when in a spot of difficulty. "Once I started on *Stellar 7*, *Battlezone* was out of my mind," states Damon. "I had to have a lot of enemies with different behaviours to keep it interesting, plus new levels. There were cubes that provided obstacles, but to do a riff on this, I added 'guise mines'. These looked almost the same as the cubes, but exploded on contact. I added other mines that tracked – inspired by stories I heard about mines in WWII that were magnetic and would move towards ships that passed by. And I

> "I WAS HOLED UP IN MY BEDROOM, CODING LIKE CRAZY, WHILE MY SISTER WAS GOING TO PARTIES AND SOCIALISING" DAMON SLYE

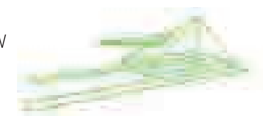
it. I called the package Three Space. Later it evolved into the library we used at Dynamix." Quickly sketching out a few rough ideas for his own *Battlezone*-inspired game, a lone Damon got to work in his room at his parent's house. "I spent the next six months programming whenever I wasn't in class. I felt like what I was doing was really important, even though no one in the world knew what I was doing. I was pretty much holed up in my bedroom, coding like crazy. My sister was out going to parties and socialising. thought that since the Raven could go invisible, it would be fun to add enemies that could also. The enemies would never cheat and peek at the player's location when he 'cloaked'. They would guess using his last-known position."

An incredible technical achievement, one wonders how Damon managed to even get the smooth wire-frame graphics running quickly enough, let alone cram everything in. "The first technical challenge was to get the frame rate fast enough. I wrote some optimised code to draw lines quickly,"

A BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO ARCTURAN ARMOUR

STELLAR 7 HAS A USEFUL INTERACTIVE IN-GAME BRIEFING TO FAMILIARISE PLAYERS WITH THE VARIOUS ENEMY VEHICLES LIKELY TO BE ENCOUNTERED DURING THE GAME. PROSPECTIVE RAVEN PILOTS SHOULD STUDY IT CAREFULLY

SAND SLED
THE SAND SLED'S RUNNERS ALLOW IT TO OPERATE ONLY ON THOSE PLANETS WHICH HAVE A SANDY OR ICY SURFACE



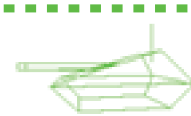
LASER TANK
LIKE THE SAND SLED, IT IS EQUIPPED WITH LASER CANNONS, BUT WE HAVE REPORTS THAT THEY ARE MUCH MORE POWERFUL



HOVERCRAFT
THE HOVERCRAFT IS OPERATIONAL ONLY ON PLANETS WITH AN ATMOSPHERE. BEWARE – THIS LITTLE DEVIL IS TENACIOUS



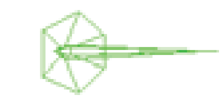
PROWLER
A FAST MEDIUM TANK WHOSE CANNON CAN CAUSE A LOT OF PROBLEMS FOR UNWARY RAVEN PILOTS



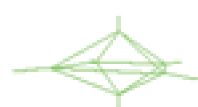
HEAVY TANK
REQUIRING SEVERAL SHOTS TO DISPATCH, AND EQUIPPED WITH A RAPID FIRING CANNON, THIS IS A FORMIDABLE ENEMY UNIT



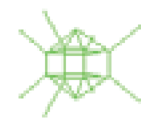
LASER BATTERY
IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT THERE IS A UNIT SIMILAR TO THE LASER BATTERY, BUT IT IS EQUIPPED WITH A HEAVY CANNON INSTEAD



PULSAR
LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THIS RECENTLY DEPLOYED ARCTURAN ROBOT UNIT



SEEKER
ARCTURAN SEEKERS WILL HOME IN ON THEIR INTENDED TARGET AND DETONATE, CAUSING HEAVY DAMAGE



SKIMMER
FEDERATION RECONNAISSANCE INFORMS US THAT THERE IS AT LEAST ONE OTHER TYPE OF FLYER IN THE ARCTURAN ARMADA



STALKER
WE HAVE NO PHOTOGRAPHS OF THIS TOP SECRET ARCTURAN AGRAV UNIT. UNSUBSTANTIATED REPORTS INDICATE THAT IT MAY BE EQUIPPED WITH AN INVISIO-CLOAK

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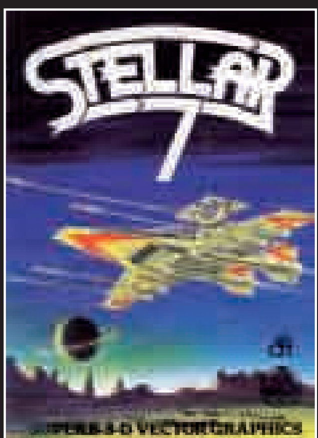
THE MAKING OF…

STELLAR 7





» [C64] The Commodore version adds a splash of background colour to the various planetary systems.



» The cover artwork for the European release of *Stellar 7*, published by US Gold.

Damon reveals. "One trick was to use self-modifying code. The other slow part was the math to do 3D graphics. The 6502 on the Apple II had two crippling defects. First, it ran at one megahertz. For comparison today's computers run at three gigahertz. And the 6502 had a pitiful instruction set. It could only add, subtract, and do some bit manipulations. I needed multiply and divide. The standard routines, using additions and byte shifting, were too slow. I was able to get them quite a bit faster by noticing certain things about the details of the operations, and to unwrap the loops so you don't have to have a counter. In the end I think those routines were as fast as they possibly could be."

Creating the various vector shapes for the enemy tanks, obstacles, and flying machines was a painstaking process. "I pretty much wrote all the code on notebook paper before typing any of it in. Back then the tools were so poor you really wanted to write bug-free code the first time. There were no debuggers, and for a while many of us didn't even have an assembler. We'd convert the assembly instructions to hex codes by hand. That's really slow." As for squeezing the whole game into the Apple's 48K of memory… "It was a challenge," laughs Damon. "I hid the fonts in some graphics memory that was unused. Adding sounds was weird. There were no software interrupts and I had to count the cycles of all the routines in the game, then manually insert a call to my software sound driver every 1/60th of a second. Looking back on it now, it was a lot of work – difficult to the point that it seems absurd. But of course back then it felt like magic since hardly anyone knew how to do this stuff."

"*Stellar 7* was fun to do," says Damon fondly. "I quit university after two terms to focus on completing the game. The first few times I ran it, it crashed, but after about a day it was running. It was very exciting when I saw the first Sand Sled come zooming at me!"

"I was happy with how the game turned out. It was fun and played well. It started out pretty easy, but new types of enemies would appear on the higher levels, and you'd have to find new tactics to deal with them. I think the neatest thing was the enemy intelligence. They had some pretty interesting behaviours. The final boss was pretty tough, he would turn invisible to get away from you, and would try to guess where you were when you cloaked. Unfortunately, hardly anyone saw him because it was so tough to make it to the seventh level."

Stellar 7 was published in the US by Penguin Software, a vendor of games and graphics tools for the Apple II and C64. "I approached EA and Brøderbund," explains Damon. "Then Jeff Tunnell was starting a publishing company and he offered me a huge royalty of 30 per cent, so I went with that deal. That got us started working together. Eventually we gave up on being a publisher since it was too hard to get into the retail channel with a single SKU. So we published that game with Penguin, plus another called *Sword Of Kadash* by Chris Cole."

A conversion for the Commodore 64 was completed, by Damon himself, which made it to Europe under the US Gold banner. "On the Commodore 64 I could add coloured backgrounds," says Damon. "The frame rate was a little slower. I believe the clock was slightly faster on the Apple. Perhaps if I had used sprites for some things I could have increased it, but then the art style would not have been as pure."

Unfortunately sales, particularly in the United States, were somewhat disappointing. "I think we only sold around 8,000 units," admits Damon. "Hit games were selling around 80,000

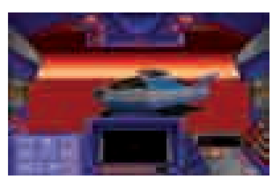
THE ARCTURAN LEGACY



ALTHOUGH THE ORIGINAL APPLE II AND COMMODORE 64 VERSIONS WERE NOT GREAT COMMERCIAL SUCCESSES, AND DESPITE THE UNOFFICIAL SEQUEL, *ARCTICFOX*, DYNAMIX DECIDED TO 'REBOOT' ITS GAMING DEBUT IN 1990. "WE DECIDED TO DO A PC REMAKE," SAYS DAMON. "I DIRECTED IT. AT THAT TIME WE HAD THE BEST 3D VGA WITH FULL 256 COLOUR. WE ADDED A BOSS TO EACH LEVEL, INSTEAD OF JUST THE BOSS AT THE END. THE REMAKE WAS A BIG HIT, AND WAS REALLY EASY TO DO. WE USED ALL THE ORIGINAL ALGORITHMS FOR ENEMY BEHAVIOUR FROM THE APPLE VERSION. THE PROGRAMMER, PIOTR LUKASZUK, DID A GREAT JOB. I WAS HAPPY WITH THE REMAKE. IT PROVIDED NICE ARCADE GAMEPLAY, AND SHOWCASED OUR CUSTOMER'S VGA GRAPHICS CARDS." VERSIONS WOULD ALSO FOLLOW FOR THE AMIGA AND MAC. A TRUE SEQUEL, *NOVA 9*, WAS RELEASED IN 1994.



ADDITIONAL VERSIONS OF THE GAME ALSO MADE IT TO CONSOLE PLATFORMS. *STELLAR FIRE* WAS A MUCH SIMPLIFIED ARCADE-STYLE VARIANT DEVELOPED FOR THE SEGA MEGA-CD, WHILE THE MUCH SLICKER 3DO RELEASE *STELLAR 7: DRAXON'S REVENGE* FEATURED FULLY TEXTURED POLYGON ENEMIES AND ATTRACTIVE CG CUT-SCENES.



Stellar 7 on PC featured impressive early solid-filled colour 3D graphics.



Stellar Fire made its way on to the Sega Mega-CD, and it looked pretty good.

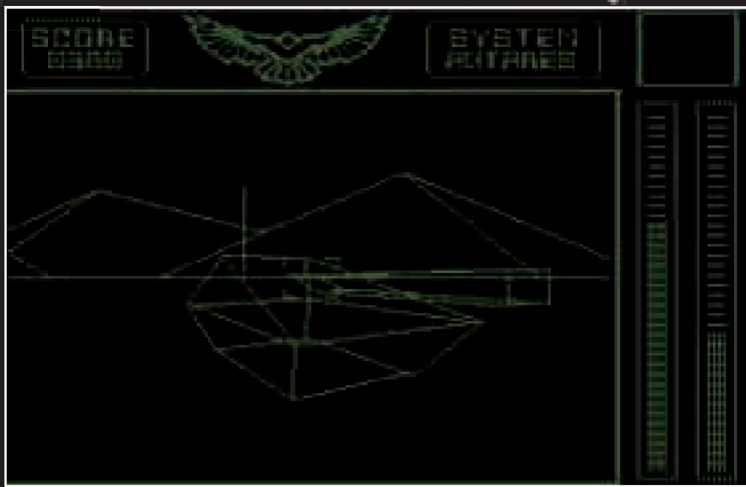


Stellar 7: Draxon's Revenge was published by Sierra and released on the Philips 3DO in 1993.



Stellar Fire and *Draxon's Revenge* had some of the finest visuals in the *Stellar 7* lineage, and were narrated by Michael Dorn.





» [Apple II] At close proximity to a Prowler's gun barrel.



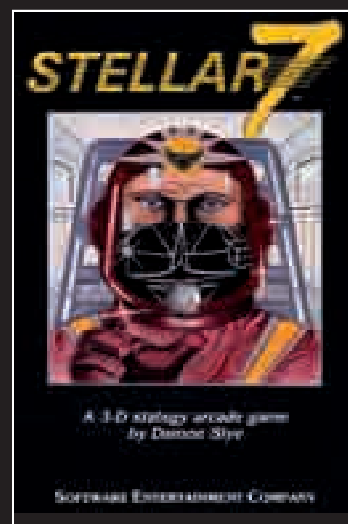
» **[C64]** Approaching the business end of a Laser Tank is best achieved under the cover of invisibility.

units back then. Later I met lots of people that had played it. Apparently it had been heavily pirated. I know I saw very little money from it, maybe $5,000 total. It was still worth it. I loved making it, and it got me started on a career in games." *Stellar 7*'s fans included bestselling author Tom Clancy, who would later call Damon to tell him how he had played the game every day after it was released. "It was fun when Tom Clancy called," smiles Damon. "I sent him some other games I had done by then, and he sent me a copy of his latest book *The Sum Of All Fears*. Soon after he entered the game business himself with *Rainbow Six*."

"After *Stellar 7*, I went on to found Dynamix with Jeff Tunnell," says Damon. While working at the company he was involved in the design of *Skyfox II* and *Arcticfox*, a semi-sequel to *Stellar 7*. "EA passed on *Stellar 7*, but it did catch the eye of their producer, Joe Ybarra. When they were signing up new artists, he recognised our technical skill, and gave us a contract to build a similar game on the Amiga. That game was *Arcticfox*, the first original game (not a port) released on the Amiga. The core gameplay was all based on *Stellar 7*. It had the same enemy behaviours, with a more complex strategic element, plus solid-filled coloured 3D graphics." Another notable product in which Damon had a major hand in the design stakes was the early 'survival horror' game *Project Firestart*, released in 1989 through EA for the C64.

After self-publishing its games for a brief period, Dynamix would become part of the Sierra empire in the Nineties, releasing classic simulations such as *Red Baron* and *A-10 Tank Killer*, and even the odd graphic adventure such as *Heart Of China*. "Later I took a 12-year hiatus," Damon concludes, "but I've recently returned to the game business." His most recent venture is his involvement in setting up the game design company Mad Otter Games (www.madottergames.com), in 2008. Its most recent project, the World War I combat sim *Ace Of Aces*, rekindles Damon's love of computer flight simulations, as made famous during the Dynamix glory years. And all this from a boyish desire to create a *Battlezone*-beating tank game on an underpowered 8-bit computer. Maybe it was worth skipping all those parties after all.

"I THINK WE ONLY SOLD AROUND 8,000 UNITS. HIT GAMES WERE SELLING AROUND 80,000 UNITS BACK THEN. LATER I MET LOTS OF PEOPLE THAT HAD PLAYED IT. APPARENTLY IT HAD BEEN HEAVILY PIRATED" DAMON SLYE



» The original Apple II version, briefly self-published by Damon Slye and Jeff Tunnell.

» **[Apple II]** The homing Seekers were inspired by magnetic shipping mines in WWII.



> "NEC AND HUDSON SOFT TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO ANOTHER SECTOR OF THE MARKET DOMINATED BY NINTENDO – THE PORTABLE ARENA – AND SET ABOUT PLANNING THEIR CONQUEST"



PC-ENGINE GT

IT MAY HAVE FAILED TO SELL IN THE NUMBERS EXPECTED BUT THE PC-ENGINE GT REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST DESIRABLE PIECES OF CONSOLE HARDWARE EVER PRODUCED. DAMIEN MCFERRAN STOCKS UP ON AA BATTERIES AND LOOKS BACK ON THE MACHINE THAT DELIVERED PORTABLE GAMING IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN



Year released: 1990 (Japan)

Original price: $299 (around £150)

Buy it now for: £50-£100

Associated magazines: TurboPlay (USA), Go! (UK, C&VG supplement), PCE Freak (Japan)

Why the PC-Engine GT was great… Being able to play cutting-edge HuCard software on the move made you an instant hero among like-minded gamers, and the cutting-edge LCD screen made rivals like the Lynx and Game Gear look decidedly dodgy in comparison.

Comfortably sitting here in 2008 it's hard to fully appreciate the impact the PC-Engine GT had when it was released nearly 20 years ago. To give this momentous hardware launch a touch of perspective, if it were to happen today it would be the equivalent of Sony releasing a portable PS3. Bearing this in mind it's relatively easy to see why this eminently desirable slab of plastic retains such an avid following nowadays; it is arguably the most elite portable console of its time, comfortably putting contemporary rivals in the shade and costing lucky owners an arm and a leg in the process.

To trace the genesis of the GT it's worth taking a look at the gaming landscape back in the late-Eighties. Looking to crack the rapidly expanding console market, Japanese companies NEC and Hudson Soft had entered into a deal whereby the former would provide capital and production facilities and the latter would contribute its newly developed chipset and a wealth of industry experience. The result was a console that took Japan by storm: the PC-Engine (consult our rather excellent PC-Engine Retroinspection in **Retro Gamer** issue 40 for more information). With Nintendo's legendary stranglehold in Japan successfully broken, it's easy to see why NEC and partner Hudson Soft felt they could do no wrong. The ebullient cohorts turned their attention to another sector of the market dominated by Nintendo – the portable arena – and set about planning their conquest.

The monochrome Game Boy had built on Nintendo's experience with its seminal LCD Game & Watch range and had unsurprisingly sold by the bucket load. The triumphant performance of the PC-Engine bestowed its creators with a fair degree of confidence and buoyed by this success they evidently felt they could permit their R&D departments to go a little crazy. Not only did this productive union result in the console industry's first CD-ROM attachment in 1988, it also sired the stillborn SuperGrafx, an augmented version of the PC-Engine that was intended to take on Sega's Mega Drive, but failed miserably. The portable GT was yet another project to spring from the overactive minds of NEC and Hudson Soft's talented engineers.

Rather than follow Nintendo's lead and craft a console that was both highly portable and cheap to produce, so it could retail for a reasonable price, the decision was made to construct a product that would harness the very best technology the domestic market could offer and miniaturise it. Astonishingly, the GT was identical to NEC's home hardware, boasting the same HuC6280 processor technology and impressive sprite-handling capabilities of the custom HuC6270 16-bit graphics chip. Granted, Sega took a similar route with the Game Gear, basing it on the trusty 8-bit Master System hardware, but in terms of raw power there was little point in comparing the two. The PC-Engine was in a different league to Sega's machine.

As well as giving the GT technical parity with the phenomenally successful home hardware, the new console also utilised the same HuCard (or TurboChip if you were of the American persuasion) storage method for games. The ability to play your home console collection on the move cannot be understated; it's also important to keep in mind the uniqueness of the PC-Engine carts at the time. The credit card-sized HuCards were compact, highly portable and surprisingly sturdy, all



» A rather happy looking fellow helps promote the GT in this Japanese advert.

INSTANT EXPERT

Although the GT and its parent console the PC-Engine are often compared to machines like the NES and SMS thanks to their 8-bit CPUs, the graphics chip is in fact 16-bit.

Like the PC-Engine, the PC-E GT featured some rather handy auto-fire switches.

The appeal of NEC's hardware was expandability, but sadly the GT couldn't be hooked up to any of the PC-Engine CD-ROM add-ons.

The TurboGrafx port of flight simulator *Falcon* featured a dedicated two-player dogfight mode that could only be unlocked using the TurboLink.

Because you couldn't hook up the TurboBooster Plus memory backup device to the GT, games that required you to save in-between sessions were impractical.

A dedicated adaptor was produced to overcome region lock-out problems, which was handy for TurboExpress owners as very few quality games actually made it the United States.

As well as appearing in *Enemy Of The State*, the GT also cropped up in the lamentable *3 Ninjas* movie, as well as an episode of TV show *Doogie Howser, MD.*

The TurboVision TV tuner showcased additional audio and video inputs, which meant you could use your TurboExpress as a (very small) monitor.

Towards the end of the TurboExpress's life, the price was dropped and a four-game bundle pack was introduced to boost sales – neither tactic worked.

If you purchase a GT and find the sound is particularly low, you'll need to crack that baby open and get the soldering iron out, because the capacitors are faulty – an unfortunately common problem with NEC's portable.

PC-ENGINE GT

OTHER VERSIONS WHEN ONE MACHINE ISN'T ENOUGH

PC-Engine
Released in 1987, this is the machine upon which the GT is based. Diminutive and showcasing one of the most attractive designs in videogame history, it quickly became a bestseller in Japan. The CoreGrafx and CoreGrafx II soon followed, but both were essentially the same.



TurboDuo
A PC-Engine and CD-ROM attachment, the Duo was meant to compete with the SNES. For NEC addicts, this is the only machine worth owning as you can play HuCard and CD-ROM games. The Duo-R and Duo-RX followed, but with only cosmetic alterations.



PC-Engine LT
An enhancement of the GT concept, this exclusive machine featured a superior screen and improved connectivity (it could link to the CD-ROM unit). It also cost the earth and wasn't that portable, nevertheless it still remains a highly sought-after entry in the NEC catalogue.



PC-Engine Shuttle
One of the most pointless releases in NEC's history, this was essentially a re-styled PC-Engine, but lacked the ability to link to the CD-ROM unit. It was aimed at children but the new casing design didn't find many fans, regardless of age. Nevertheless, it remains highly collectable these days.



C'MON GUYS, ACCESSORISE

With every portable console there seems to be a tidal wave of additional accessories to purchase, and the GT was no exception to this rule. "The most common accessory for the GT is the TV Tuner, known as the TurboVision in the States," says Nanto. "The TV tuner allowed you to watch broadcast TV on your GT similar to what Sega did later with the Game Gear." It's prudent to bear in mind that this peripheral arrived a fair while before Sega's did. "The other accessories were pretty standard fare," continues Nanto. "The Car Adapter allowed you to operate your GT from a car charger, which was ideal for long journeys, the AC Adapter powered the console from an ordinary household outlet and the TurboLink allowed two consoles to play head to head on games that supported the feature."



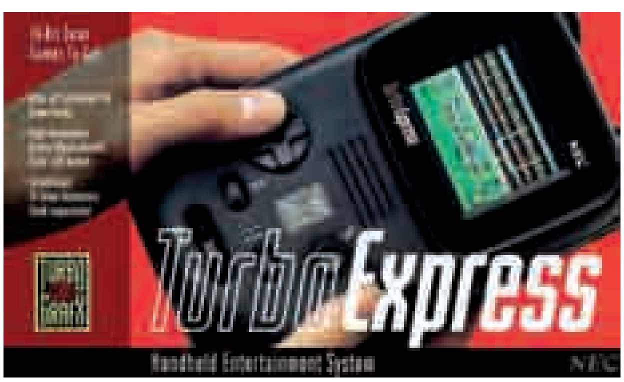
of which tied in perfectly with the core ethos of the GT. It could be argued that Sega's Game Gear also offered the same connectivity, but it required an additional (and unofficial) adaptor in order to play Master System games and wasn't constructed with the implicit aim of enabling fans to carry their entire videogame library around with them. However, arguably the most instantly appealing aspect of the GT was the breathtaking 2.6" LCD screen, which stood apart from rival portables because it didn't suffer from washed-out colours or crippling motion blur. Taking all of these points into account it's little wonder that the GT was crowned by the gaming press as the 'Rolls Royce' of handheld consoles.

Unsurprisingly, such opulence came at a lofty price. When the GT was launched in the US (renamed TurboExpress) it retailed for a wallet-punishing $299.99 (although some stores briefly sold it for $50 less), which was nearly $200 more than the market-leading Game Boy and around $100 more than the TurboGrafx-16 – which was essentially the same system but without portability. Although

> "THE GT WAS A SUPREMELY HUNGRY BEAST; TWO HOURS OF PLAY WAS THE BEST YOU COULD EXPECT TO GET OUT OF SIX AA BATTERIES. NEEDLESS TO SAY, SUCH RAVENOUS DEMAND FOR POWER MADE OWNING A GT EXCEEDINGLY COSTLY"

this premium cost was necessitated by the cutting-edge technology inside the unit, it nevertheless proved to be a fatal mistake on the part of NEC as it placed the machine firmly outside the reach of most gamers, rendering it uncompetitive in commercial terms. "The GT is still one of the most expensive portable game systems ever made," says NEC expert and PCEngineFX.com founder Aaron Nanto. "With the Game Boy, Game Gear and Lynx all being substantially lower priced at the time, the GT had no chance to sell better than those other systems. If NEC had priced

» The US packaging boasted of 16-bit colour visuals – something the Game Boy couldn't offer.





» Given the nature of the screen, shooters tended to be the best choice for GT owners – thankfully the PC-Engine has more than its fair share of these.

the unit competitively with the Game Boy or even the Game Gear from the start, things probably would have been a bit different."

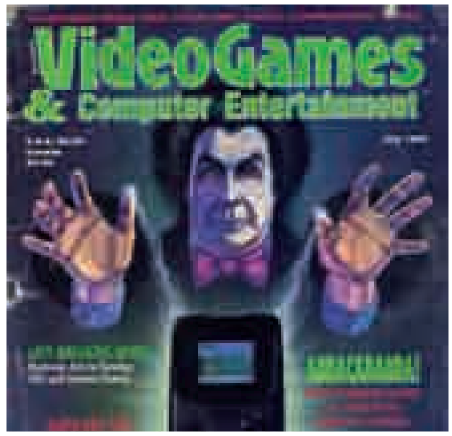
To add to the issues the towering retail price presented, there were other niggles with the actual hardware itself. The LCD screen may have been better than anything previously seen on a portable console, but it wasn't perfect. It actually ran at a lower resolution than its domestic counterpart, which naturally caused headaches. "Since the resolution of the GT was so low, any game with text was almost impossible to read so the unit was only really suitable for games in the action/shooter genres, such as *Soldier Blade* and *Bonk's Adventure*," explains Nanto. This sadly meant that text-based adventures were practically unplayable on the machine.

Problems with the display didn't end there. The term 'dead pixel' may be commonplace these days, but back in the early Nineties consumers were less familiar with this issue; when several early adopters discovered that their newly purchased (and very expensive) GTs were missing pixels, the ensuing negative press did a lot to hurt the image of the fledgling portable. Another problem was encountered with the sound, which often came through very weakly or not at all; this issue was traced to faulty capacitors. The seemingly careless level of quality control displayed by NEC only added to the rather downbeat public perception of the console – which, it has to be remembered, was retailing for nearly three times the price of the market-leading (and very dependable) Game Boy.

Even the distinctive advantage of being compatible with PC-Engine software presented a rather strange situation for NEC when it came to promoting the machine. "The marketing strategy focused on the fact you could take the exact same game from



» The PC-Engine GT packaging was typically understated and made the machine even more desirable for anybody with money to burn.



» US magazine *VideoGames & Computer Entertainment* broke the news of the PC-Engine GT with this rather disturbing cover.

the home console and play it on the portable," recalls Nanto. It was an undeniably unique selling point, but the business model was critically flawed from the outset. Traditionally speaking, manufacturers expect to lose out financially on hardware but make profit on software. NEC's plan seemed to ignore the fact that it was essentially preaching to the converted and in selling the GT to existing owners it would fail to benefit from the additional software sales that new customers would bring, as established PC-Engine fans would be unlikely to purchase any additional software purely because they owned the GT. As it turned out, the prohibitive price point dissuaded even these hardcore devotees from purchasing the console, and NEC's already flimsy strategy fell to pieces.

Perhaps the most debilitating issue with the machine was power consumption. As was the case with other colour portable machines of that era, the GT was a supremely hungry beast; approximately two hours of play was the best you could expect to get out of a fresh set of six AA batteries. Needless to say this severely limited the portability of the console and in an era before rechargeable batteries were commonplace, such ravenous demand for power made owning a GT exceedingly costly.



Although compatibility with PC-Engine software ensured that those gamers brave enough to pick up the machine were at least kept happy for a few years, the GT ceased to be a commercial force fairly swiftly and was steadily reduced in price until it was eventually discontinued. Getting trustworthy sales data from nearly two decades ago isn't easy, but it's believed that the machine shifted a disappointing 1.5 million units worldwide – well short of what NEC and Hudson Soft expected after the success of the PC-Engine.

The GT may have failed to seriously challenge the might of the Game Boy, but today it enjoys plenty of attention from keen gaming enthusiasts and despite its faults takes pride of place in any right-minded retro fan's collection. While second-hand machines still manage to maintain their exclusive allure and similarly inflated price points, it's not that hard to track down a console for a semi-reasonable sum. "The GT is fairly easy to obtain these days," Nanto says. "The unit isn't rare by any means, so if you wanted to buy one it would be an easy process. Units vary wildly in price, but you can expect to pay around $100 (£50) to $200 (about £100), depending on condition and whether it's a US or Japanese unit." Strictly speaking, the Eastern variant is the most appealing (and the most costly) as it grants access to a much wider range of software; like its domestic counterpart, the GT utilises region protection so US games will only work on a US TurboExpress, and vice versa.

The GT may have some serious niggles but it still makes a convincing argument for being one of the finest portable consoles ever produced; remembering the context of its release, it really was a revelation. The ability to take what was still a cutting-edge machine and play it on the move (albeit for short periods of time) was enough to make many hardcore gamers fall helplessly in love with the GT – thankfully that adoration is still alive and well today.

TAKING YOU TO THE MOVIES

It may well be common knowledge now but we couldn't do a feature on the GT without mentioning what is arguably the console's defining moment – appearing in its American TurboExpress guise in the 1998 Hollywood blockbuster *Enemy Of The State* alongside Will Smith and Gene Hackman. The TurboExpress is used to conceal a memory card containing footage of a murder, and is eventually planted on Will Smith's character, which triggers a series of unfortunate events that transpire to make Smith a threat to national security. Although the TurboExpress isn't actually shown in action (unsurprisingly, flash memory cards aren't compatible with the machine) it nevertheless gets some impressive screen time. It's a shame that by the time the movie was released, both the TurboExpress and American distributor TTI were both dead and buried – this kind of media attention would have been a massive boost in the dark days of the early Nineties.



COMMUNITY PC-ENGINE SITES TO WATCH

PC-Engine FX

http://pcenginefx.com

The domain of NEC expert and all-round nice guy Aaron Nanto, this slick and highly professional site should be your first port of call if you're new to the world of NEC. It contains news, videos, FAQs and even a store that sells brand new TG-16 software. Essential.



TurboGrafx-16.com

www.atari7800.com/turbo

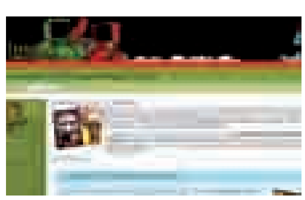
This site documents the history of NEC consoles with a variety of documents and nostalgic musings. It also has a comprehensive 'Tricknology' archive packed with cheats for many titles. Some parts are still under development, but it's a worthwhile visit nonetheless.



TurboPlay Magazine Archives

http://archives.tg-16.com

This site was set up to document all references to the TG-16/PC-E in printed media. It's pretty incredible, with loads of high-quality scans. Magazines such as *EGM*, *TurboForce* and *GameFan* are all represented here.



The PC-Engine Software Bible

www.pcengine.co.uk

If you're looking to buy PC-E software then this is the site for you. It has almost every release for the machine and gives a rating out of five. The reviews are short and sweet, so you'll know pretty quickly if a game's worth bothering with or not.



PC-ENGINE GT

PERFECT TEN GAMES

Okay, so we're obviously cheating here, as we've already published a perfect ten PC-Engine games in a previous issue. Still, due to the small screen and impossible-to-read text you have to be a little more careful when choosing your games. Pick any of the ten below and you'll be off to a perfect start



01

AIR ZONK/PC DENJIN

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHED BY:** HUDSON SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** RED/HUDSON SOFT
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BONK'S ADVENTURE

01 **A side-scrolling** shooter featuring a futuristic version of Hudson Soft's mascot Bonk (or PC Genjin as he was known to his Japanese fans), *Air Zonk* is one of the most visually accomplished games to be released on NEC's 8-bit wonder. Showcasing incredible multi-layer scrolling and some absolutely massive sprites, the game really does push the PC-Engine GT's hardware to the absolute limit. A CD version of *Air Zonk* was also released, but ironically it isn't quite as good as the HuCard variant – the two games are actually rather different in terms of structure. Given the stature of the game it should come as no surprise to learn that *Air Zonk* currently fetches a fair few bob on eBay these days. Certainly worth getting if you can afford it.



02

SOLDIER BLADE

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHED BY:** HUDSON SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** RED/HUDSON SOFT
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SUPER STAR SOLDIER

02 **Part of the** influential *Star Soldier* lineage, *Soldier Blade* was the final game in the series to be released on the PC-Engine and remains a solid fan favourite. Graphically it remains impressive even today, featuring plenty of fast-moving and well-detailed sprites dashing around some sumptuous, eye-catching backgrounds. Debate still rages as to which is the finest shoot-'em-up on the format, but this certainly makes a very strong claim to that crown. *Soldier Blade* also looks absolutely gorgeous on the PC-Engine GT's 2.6-inch LCD screen, which effortlessly deals with the rapid nature of the gameplay. Second-hand prices are high, but still affordable, and an American release is also available.

SUPER ADVENTURE ISLAND

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHED BY:** HUDSON SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ADVENTURE ISLAND

03 **A very likeable** offshoot of the *Wonder Boy* series, *Super Adventure Island* takes the core gameplay of the Sega original and adds some neat touches. The player takes control of Takahashi Meijin (Master Higgins in the West), who is based on a Hudson Soft employee. Visually it's a joy, with bold colourful sprites and wonderfully expressive characters. The light-hearted nature of the gameplay makes it an ideal companion for those trips into the outside world. To confuse matters, the previous PC-Engine *Adventure Island* title is a retooled version of *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap.*

DON DOKO DON

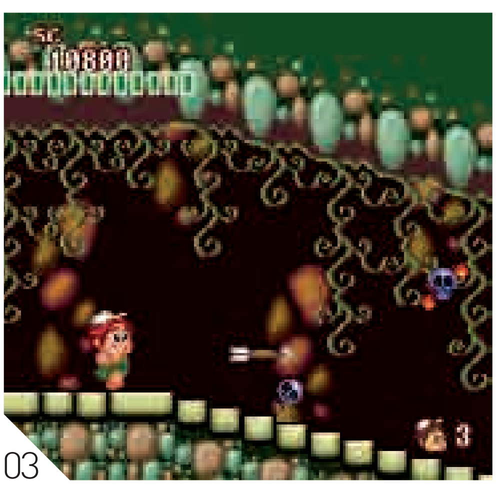
» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **PUBLISHED BY:** TAITO
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NEW ZEALAND STORY

04 **This hugely underrated** platform romp is often ignored thanks to its similarity to fellow Taito classic *Bubble Bobble*. While it certainly looks like its stable mate, *Don Doko Don* is very different in terms of gameplay. Instead of blowing bubbles, the player hurls mallets in the general direction of hostiles, stunning them on contact. They can then be picked up and thrown at other baddies. As is the case in *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands*, defeated enemies leave behind fruit that can be gobbled in order to gain even more points. It's a brilliantly enjoyable title, and this is shown by its high second-hand value.

AERO BLASTERS

» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **PUBLISHED BY:** HUDSON SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** INTER STATE/KANEKO
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DJ BOY

05 **The Mega Drive** version is arguably superior but this remains a fine conversion of a criminally ignored horizontal shooter. Tremendously close to its arcade parent visually, there are some minor changes that stop it being as faithful as it could possibly be, but they don't seriously impede on the abundance of enjoyment that is on offer. *Aero Blasters* (also known as *Air Buster*) is colourful, challenging and incredibly chaotic – everything you want from a decent blaster. Although the game has a decent reputation, it won't cost you the earth to locate a copy, and it even had the privilege of getting a US release – albeit with terrible box art.



03

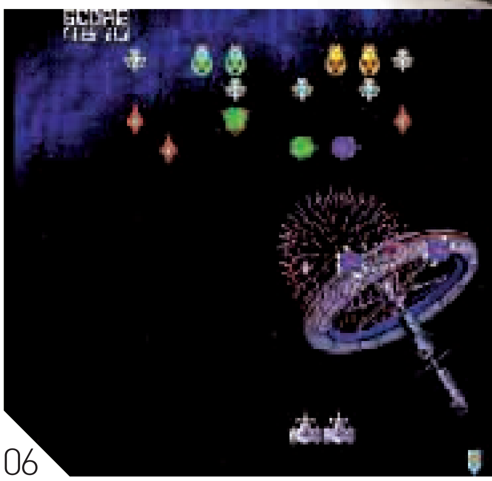


04



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08

GALAGA '88

» **RELEASED:** 1988
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NAMCO
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** WONDER-MOMO

06 **The oldest game** to be featured in our perfect ten GT games, *Galaga '88* is pure shooter brilliance. A sequel of the wonderful arcade classic *Galaxian*, the game contains some suitably hectic gameplay and becomes deliriously addictive after absolutely no time at all. The sparse visuals actually work in its favour when played on the GT's LCD screen, with the black background making it easy to see what's going on. Combined with the pick-up-and-play quality of the gameplay, it makes *Galaga '88* the ideal cohort for NEC's portable hardware. The TG-16 variant is confusingly called *Galaga '90* due to it having a later release date.

DEVIL CRASH

» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NAXAT
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ALIEN CRUSH

07 **Alien Crush was** a fantastic simulation of pinball that just happened to contain lots of gruesome looking xenomorphs, but *Devil Crash* manages to better it in pretty much every way. Visually this is a real classic of the era, with distinctive 2D graphics that still look wonderfully repugnant even today. Like all truly great pinball simulations, the ball physics are absolutely spot-on (ironic given the supernatural nature of the tables) and the additional rooms add immeasurably to the overall experience. Rounded off with some excellent tunes and sound effects, this is an unforgettable experience that is deserving of any gamer's undivided attention.

JACKIE CHAN

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** HUDSON SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE KUNG FU

08 **Everyone loves Jackie** Chan, don't they? The seemingly indestructible martial artist is so likeable it's hardly surprising to discover that this platform action title is jolly good fun, too. Featuring amusing cartoon sprites and some seriously entertaining gameplay, this remains one of the finest examples of the genre available on the PC-Engine. As well as running and leaping through a series of oriental levels, Jackie is also able to dish out his own brand of slapstick violence via a series of punches, kicks and special moves, the latter being accessed by picking up special items dotted throughout the stages. A must-have for all GT owners.


09

1943 KAI

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** NAXAT SOFT
» **CREATED BY:** NAXAT/CAPCOM
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NAXAT OPEN

09 **An absolutely brilliant** conversion of Capcom's much-loved arcade title, this PC-Engine port actually features two different versions of the game. The Arcade version is, as you would probably expect, a faithful copy of its coin-op parent, but the real attraction here is the Original mode, which is a suitably enhanced update with improved graphics, some slightly different levels and a wonderful soundtrack. One has to wonder just how Naxat Soft managed to do it, considering the generally average quality of its other games. Although many other shooters boast far more complex game mechanics and superior visuals, *1943 Kai* has bags of gameplay and is extremely worthy of a place in our perfect ten and is definitely worth a purchase, too.

MAGICAL CHASE

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PALSOFT
» **CREATED BY:** QUEST
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** OGRE BATTLE

10 **This is an** extremely sought-after 'cute-'em-up' game in the same vein as the *Cotton* franchise. The player assumes the role of a kind-hearted witch, called Ripple, and must safely guide her through several horizontally scrolling levels, taking on hordes of wonderfully coloured foes in the process. It certainly looks harmless enough but the sickly sweet visuals belie the fantastic shooter action that is contained within. *Magical Chase* was lucky enough to get an American release, although for some inexplicable reason several sprites and some of the backgrounds were altered – the first level in particular looks very different in the US edition of the game. Both the Japanese and American versions carry a hefty price tag these days.

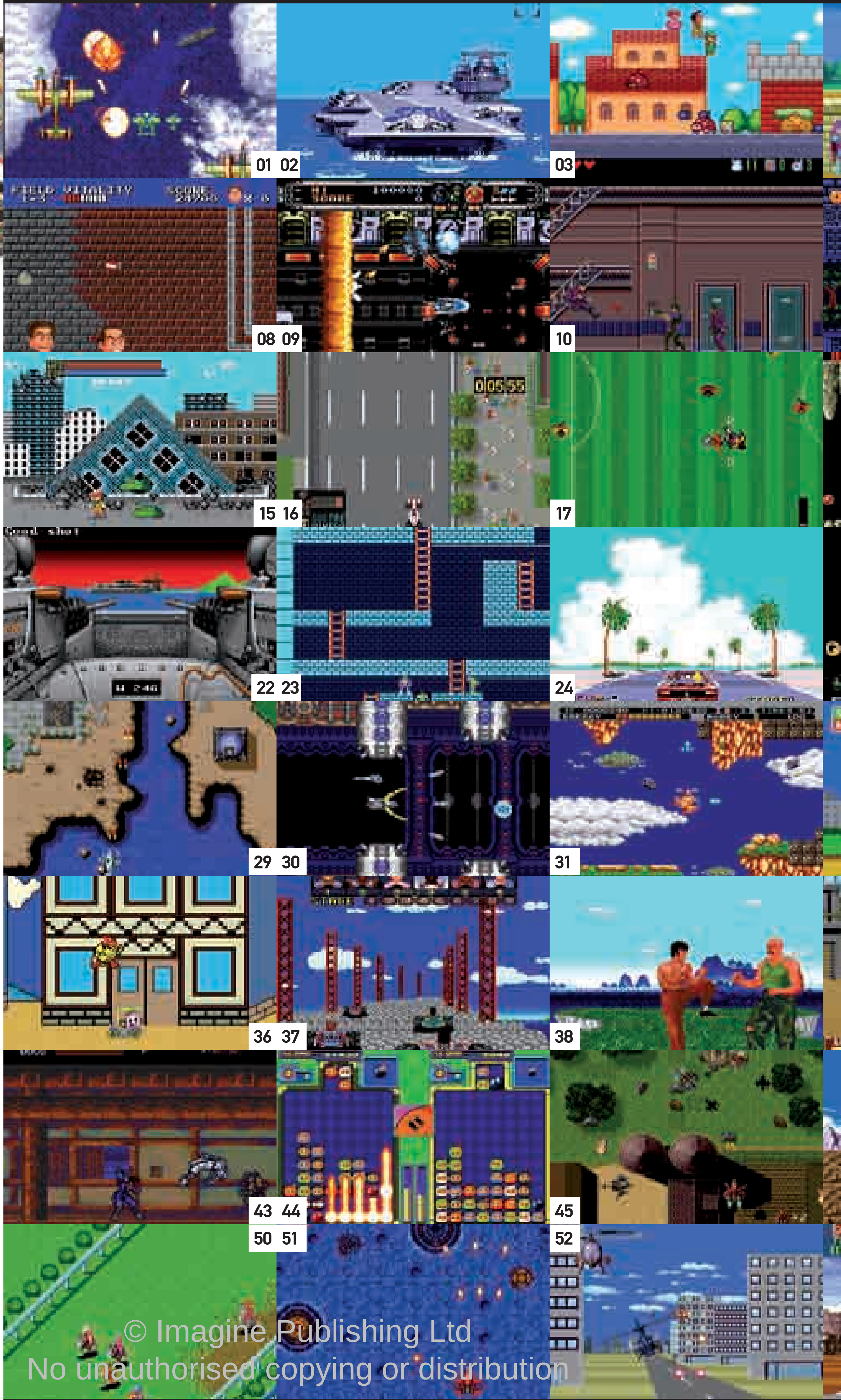

10



PC-ENGINE GT and the rest. . .

Being able to play PC Engine games meant that the GT had an amazing wealth of titles to draw upon. To the right are just a few of them.

01 1941
02 AFTER BURNER II
03 BLUE BLINK
04 ALTERED BEAST
05 BATMAN
06 MONSTER PRO WRESTLING
07 BERABO MAN
08 KATO-CHAN & KEN-CHAN
09 GATE OF THUNDER
10 CITY HUNTER
11 CORYOON
12 DRACULA X
13 SNATCHER
14 ALIEN CRUSH
15 ENERGY
16 F1 CIRCUS SPECIAL
17 POWER ELEVEN
18 ATOMIC ROBO KID SPECIAL
19 FIRE PRO WRESTLING
20 THE DYNASTIC HERO
21 GRADIUS
22 GUNBOAT
23 LODE RUNNER
24 OUTRUN
25 PARODIUS
26 MAGICAL CHASE
27 KLAX
28 SPACE HARRIER
29 TIGER-HELI
30 VIOLENT SOLDIER
31 MR HELI
32 WONDER-MOMO
33 NINJA SPIRIT
34 TOILET KIDS
35 VIGILANTE
36 PAC-LAND
37 POWER DRIFT
38 THE KUNG FU
39 OPERATION WOLF
40 GUNHED
41 IMAGE FIGHT
42 JACKIE CHAN
43 KAZE KIRI
44 PANIC BOMBER
45 RAIDEN
46 RASTAN SAGA II
47 RED ALERT
48 TRICKY
49 PSYCHIC STORM
50 WORLD JOCKEY
51 TATSUJIN
52 THUNDER BLADE
53 S.C.I.
54 SHADOW OF THE BEAST
55 SHINOBI
56 PRINCE OF PERSIA




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SUPER STAR WARS

USE THE MODE 7, LUKE



- **PUBLISHER:** VICTOR INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **GENRE:** RUN-'N'-GUN
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SNES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10



HISTORY

Seventy bloody quid. That's how much my Japanese copy of *Super Star Wars* cost when I sent my mum out to pick it up for me on Christmas Eve of 1992.

Released the year Lucas's sci-fi classic celebrated its 15th birthday, there was much to get excited about. After all, this was back in the days when most *Star Wars* games used to be pretty good, so a new game was always something to look forward to, especially when it was to be a title that would harness the full power of Nintendo's 16-bit console.

As it turned out, *Super Star Wars* did not disappoint. Granted, it was ridiculously hard in places and certain stages – the assault on the Jawa's sandcrawler, for example – were liable to make you scream in frustration, but when it worked, it worked brilliantly.

Incredibly slick to look at and featuring some impressive uses of Mode 7, *Super Star Wars* was a noticeable upgrade from the plodding NES release and featured greatly enhanced visuals, a storming soundtrack and fast-paced run-'n'-gun sections that enabled you to play as Luke, Han and Chewie. While these side-on sections made up for the majority of *Super Star Wars'* gameplay, JVC had also seen fit to include several jaw-dropping set pieces that had you zooming over the dunes of Tatooine in a landspeeder and taking part in the terrifying final assault against the Deathstar in an X-wing.

The X-wing section is particularly exhilarating and when TIE fighters are coming at you from all directions and 'that music' is blasting through your TV speakers, it really does feel that you can use 'the Force'. Such was the nostalgia that JVC skilfully re-created. Add a selection of fantastic boss encounters, including this toothy monstrosity on the right – and the end result was the best *Star Wars* title since Atari's 1983 wireframe effort. What a pity then that JVC cranked the difficulty up so much on the two sequels that they were nowhere near as much fun to play.




MONSTER

THE MAKING OF…



R-Type Delta

Considered a pinnacle of old-school shoot-'em-ups on the PlayStation, R-Type Delta was the result of a five-year battle to revive Irem's classic blaster. Mike Bevan chats to Irem's Kazuma Kujo about polygon-rendered Bydo monstrosities, deep-space Albatrosses, and the Force…

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** IREM/SONY/AGETEC

» **DEVELOPER:** IREM SOFTWARE ENGINEERING

» **RELEASED:** 1998

» **FROM THE SAME PUBLISHER:** R-TYPES (PSONE), STEAMBOT CHRONICLES (PS2), R-TYPE TACTICS (PSP)

» **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+ (PAL VERSION)

With the arrival of the 32-bit PlayStation and Saturn consoles both offering a considerable evolution of graphical clout compared to 16-bit platforms, game producers were keen to throw off the shackles of traditional 2D and embrace a brave new world of textured polygon visuals. But in the early days of console 3D, programmers were still finding their feet with the new technology. When Konami hired Appaloosa (the developer behind the *Ecco The Dolphin* series) to update its *Contra* franchise for the PlayStation, the resulting mishmash of 2D gameplay and ugly 3D backdrops (*Legacy Of War*) was a decidedly lacklustre affair, and when a brand new *R-Type* for Sony's console was announced in 1997, there were concerned voices from the shoot-'em-up community. After all, if the likes of Konami could mess up so badly, what hope was there for a small Japanese ex-arcade developer, which had been out of the videogame industry for nearly five years?

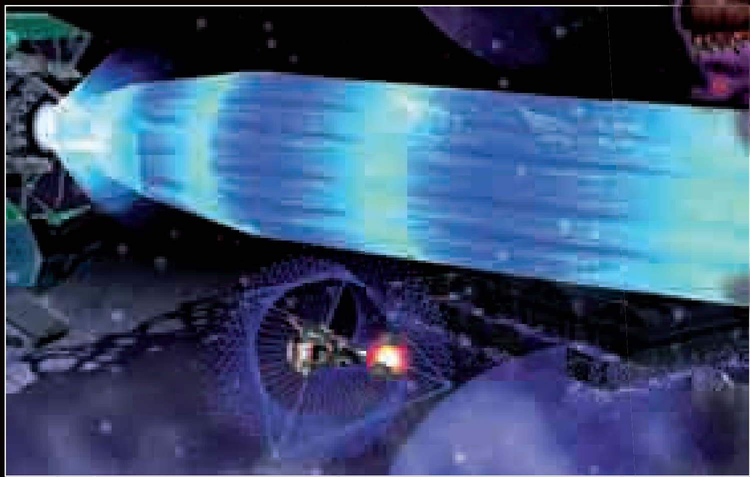
Irem's heyday had been the Eighties, during which it had made its name with arcade titles like *Moon Patrol, Kung Fu Master, Dragon Breed*, and the startlingly innovative 1987 blaster, *R-Type*. A cult hit with arcade-goers, and a favourite of the Irem developers, the game spawned two further arcade sequels (*R-Type II* and *R-Type Leo*). Ports of the original game and its sequel hit the PC-Engine and SNES respectively, becoming a 'killer-app' for NEC's console in particular. The company's fortunes declined in the early Nineties, and the SNES release *R-Type III: The Third Lightning* was increasingly looking like the last-ever entry in the series after Irem's management ordered all game production to be abandoned in 1994. "Irem had no plans for any new *R-Type* sequels until *Delta*," confirms *R-Type* series chief producer Kazuma Kujo, when questioned on the long wait for the PlayStation's re-imagining of the franchise. "For three years out of the five between *R-Type III* and *Delta*, Irem had completely stopped game production. We started work on *R-Type Delta* as soon as game development was resumed [when the company reformed as Irem Software Engineering in early 1997]."

Convincing Irem's new management about the viability of an all-new *R-Type* wasn't going to be easy. The company were realistic enough to understand the niche popularity of traditional shooters, but *R-Type* was Irem's highest profile property, and the in-house development team, veterans of previous games in the series, proposed a PlayStation



» The aquatic stage is full of neat touches, such as the surface ripples created by the Force.





» Third Contact: The Walker battleship boss (Gaits) and its unsubtle laser weapon. If only we could get round the back of it…



compilation to test the market. "The *Delta* programming team was comprised of Irem employees who had worked previously on *R-Type II* and *R-Type Leo* for the arcade, and *R-Types*," explains Kujo. *R-Types*, released the same year as the company's comeback, contains flawless ports of *R-Type* and *R-Type II*, and, at least in its Japanese incarnation, a wealth of bonus fan content and information. For the compilation, the team painstakingly disassembled the two games and recoded them specifically for the new hardware, rather than merely attempting to run them under emulation. Deals for overseas distribution were struck with Virgin Interactive and ASCII, injecting Irem's coffers with much-needed income, and resulting in the nod for the go-ahead on *Delta*. "*R-Types* gave the team some experience of PlayStation development," states Kujo, "which meant that we didn't need to employ further staff."

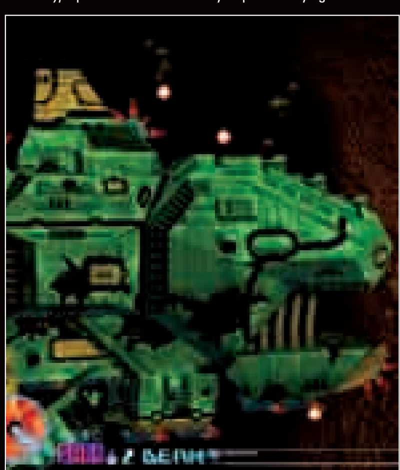
As work on the new game started in earnest the team were well aware of the pressures of building an all-new *R-Type* from scratch, especially one with the added complexity of 3D graphics. With eager fans clamouring for a top-drawer shooter that still adhered to the perfectionist approach of previous entries in the series, the *Delta* team had a lot to live up to. "Although we were aware that many fans might be hoping for the traditional 2D sprite graphics of the older games, we wanted the player to experience the *R-Type* universe in a brand new way," Kujo explains. "As a company, Irem wanted to make the transition to utilising the 3D capabilities of the new generation consoles, as a consideration for future game development. Finally, we wanted to surprise long-term players of the series with the advancements of *Delta*, to make it stand out when compared to previous *R-Type* titles." However, for fans of Sega's consoles there was to be some disappointment. "We wanted to publish on the PlayStation due to its popularity and to reach as many consumers as possible. The Saturn was never really considered," he admits.

"WE WANTED THE PLAYER TO EXPERIENCE THE R-TYPE UNIVERSE IN A BRAND NEW WAY" HAZUMA KUJO

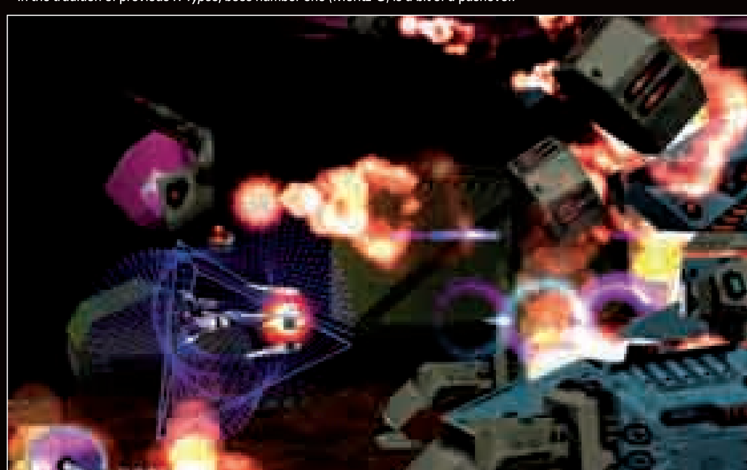
"Creating the traditional *R-Type* visuals with 3D graphics was very difficult," admits Kujo. "The R-fighters and the more traditional enemy craft were easier to create than the organic Bydo enemies, which are conceptually better suited to, and more expressive as 2D bitmapped graphics. But we were pleased with the eventual results." The team also added two new player vehicles, the R-X Albatross and R-13 Cerberus, in addition to the R-9 fighter, each with an impressive arsenal of weapons, many drawing inspiration from earlier titles in the series. "The enhanced storage capacity of the PlayStation meant there was a lot of freedom to experiment with the new R-fighters, equipment and weapon combinations, such as the new 'Force' units and 'Wave Cannon' types," says Kujo. "We also enjoyed incorporating weapon styles from previous *R-Types* and other Irem shooting games. For example, the 'Tentacle Force' weapon of the R-X Albatross was a re-imagining from Irem's previous STG release *X-Multiply*."

And with all this vivid history to plunder the team was keen to resurrect many of the famous (and infamous)

» All *R-Type* pilots must attack enemy ships while flying backwards.



» In the tradition of previous *R-Types*, boss number one (Moritz-G) is a bit of a pushover.

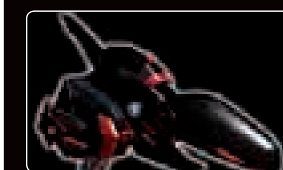


CHOOSE YOUR SHIP, PLAYER ONE



R-9A 'DELTA'

Force Unit: Standard Force
Highly reliable module with a lot of combat data gathered from use in previous missions… If detached from the fighter, the Force can shoot lasers in up to four directions.
Weapon Charge: Shock Wave Cannon
Releases charged energy straight in front of the fighter, with powerful force.
DOSE/Delta Weapon: Nuclear Catastrophe
This brings molecules existing around the fighter into nuclear fusion, causing extreme damage to the enemy.



R-13 'CERBERUS'

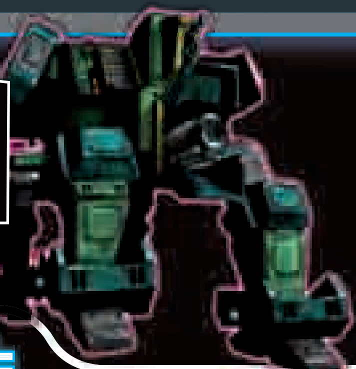
Force Unit: Anchor Force
This clawed Force unit can attach to enemies in order to destroy them. It's linked to the fighter by flexible energy beams, useful in damaging enemies or absorbing their fire.
Weapon Charge: Lightning Shock Wave Cannon
The lightning shock wave automatically searches out and destroys enemies.
DOSE/Delta Weapon: Hysteric Dawn
Tears a hole into a different dimension to blow the enemy out of time and space. Which is nice.



R-X 'ALBATROSS'

Force Unit: Tentacle Force
This Force unit reminds us of *X-Multiply*. It has a homing guidance system which locks onto enemies, firing in sync with the player's ship. A good choice for novice pilots.
Weapon Charge: Burst Shock Wave Cannon
Generates shock wave energy inside the enemy, causing fatal damage.
DOSE/Delta Weapon: Negative Colidar
Triggers a distortion in the space/time continuum, causing serious damage to your enemies. Ouch.

R-TYPE DELTA

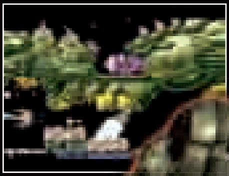


R-TYPE @ HOME

Blast off and strike the evil Bydo Empire with these other console outings for the R-9 fighter corps

R-TYPE
(PC-ENGINE, Wii) 1988

A near-flawless port of the first arcade game (the only downside being some minor screen flicker), which was originally sold on two separate HuCards due to memory issues. Single HuCard and Super CD versions were later released.



SUPER R-TYPE
(SNES, Wii) 1991

A conversion of *R-Type II*, which adds an exclusive opening stage, but lacks the arcade game's mid-level restart points – die, even at a boss, and it's back to the start of the stage. There's also bit of slowdown. Our advice? Skip it and get *R-Types*.



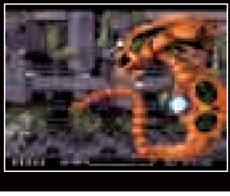
R-TYPE DX
(GBC) 1999

This package comes with colour and mono ports of *R-Type I* and *II*, and a new title *R-Type DX* for Game Boy Color users (the latter is a 'remix' of the other two game's levels). Retro-heads with an original Game Boy can enjoy the black-and-white versions.



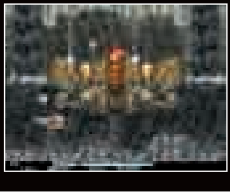
R-TYPE III
(SNES, GBA, Wii) 1993

Originally a SNES exclusive, this is another fine entry in the series, with colourful detailed visuals and a surprising amount of unique Mode 7 scaling effects. It's also the first *R-Type* game to offer a choice of three selectable Force units to play with.



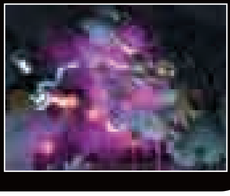
R-TYPES
(PSone) 1998

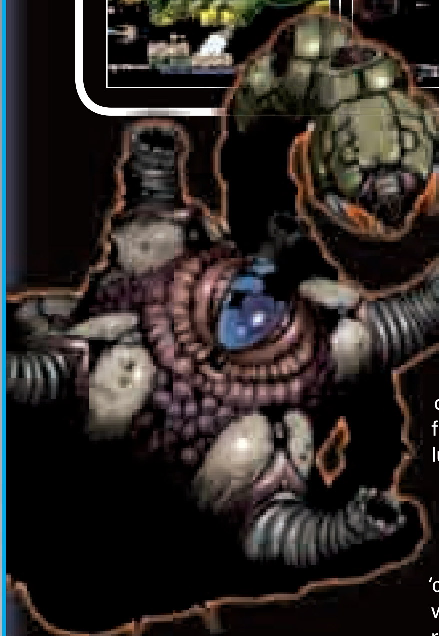
The compilation that finally made playing arcade pixel-perfect renditions of *R-Type* (and its sequel) from our sofas a reality. It's the best way to experience both games, short of buying the arcade boards. Shame they left off the underrated *Leo* though.



R-TYPE FINAL
(PS2) 2003

Irem's swan song is a fitting finale for the series, with enough content to keep any *R-Type* fan going for years. Some criticise its pacing, and its level design may not be as inspired as *Delta*'s, but stage four's 'battleship' is worth the admission price alone.



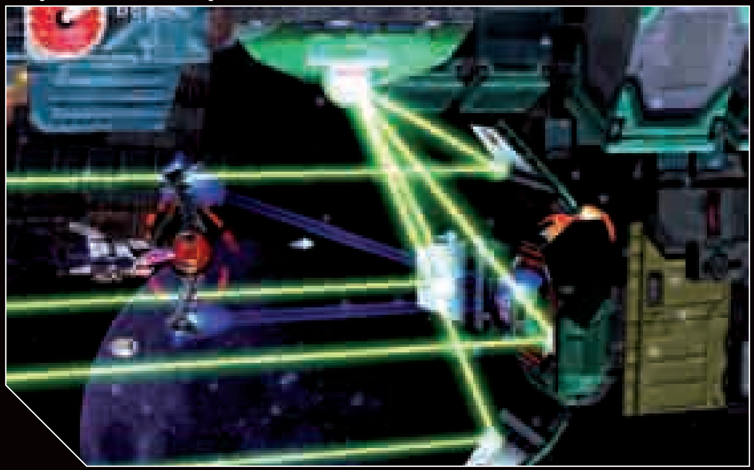


R-Type bosses of yore. "We were excited about revisiting memorable *R-Type* bosses from previous games, and redesigning and animating them in 3D," says Kujo. "For example, the stage five and stage six bosses, and the giant 'Walker' boss on stage three." The latter deserves a special mention, a re-embodiment of the notorious level three 'battleship' from the original *R-Type*, this time as a lumbering AT-AT-style behemoth. An all-new addition for *Delta*, one that risked upsetting die-hard *R-Type* addicts, was the DOSE system. Essentially a screen-clearing smart bomb, the system is 'charged' by ramming enemies directly with the Force orb, until primed to let rip at 100%. "With regards to the DOSE system, I wanted to introduce a new play method to *R-Type*, rather than simply just updating the graphics for the PlayStation," explains Kujo of the new gameplay mechanic. "While we were mindful of respecting *R-Type*'s history, we didn't want to be completely conservative in how we approached the design of the new game, and were willing to make certain changes. The DOSE system adds a new scoring dimension for the player, who has to consider how to charge it, and when to use it to gain most points. We are very proud of the 'Score Attack' system in *R-Type Delta*, which is very much tied to skilful use of the DOSE."

Graphically *Delta*, with its moody atmospherics and stunning particle effects, is a refreshingly dark alternative to previous iterations of Irem's shooter. The vibrant visualisation of the player's assorted weapons, combined with a patterned array of glowing on-screen explosions produces a light show unrivalled in modern shooters, with the possible exception of *R-Type Final*. "We put a lot of time into creating the lighting and explosion effects," says Kujo. "It was a real trial-and-error process to get them right. We also put in a lot of effort with the lateral and vertical parallax scrolling of the 3D backgrounds so players would perceive a greater sense of depth while playing." Spurring the player on is an exceptional soundtrack, which embraces a range of styles from orchestral bombast to techno. "The soundtrack was produced by a company called USP, based in Yokohama," says Kujo. "They weren't involved in any other *R-Type* games." He also reveals the innovative approach the team took to integrating the game's BGM. "First of all we intended the

"WE WERE EXCITED ABOUT REVISITING MEMORABLE R-TYPE BOSSES FROM PREVIOUS GAMES, AND REDESIGNING AND ANIMATING THEM IN 3D" KAZUMA KUJO

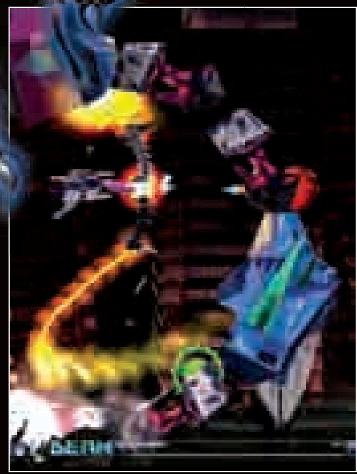
» Caught in a laser crossfire at the giant Walker's command centre.



» Fourth Contact: Here's where the true *R-Type* difficulty makes an appearance – this extremely tough vertical maze section.







» The Tentacle Force weapon is definitely our favourite.



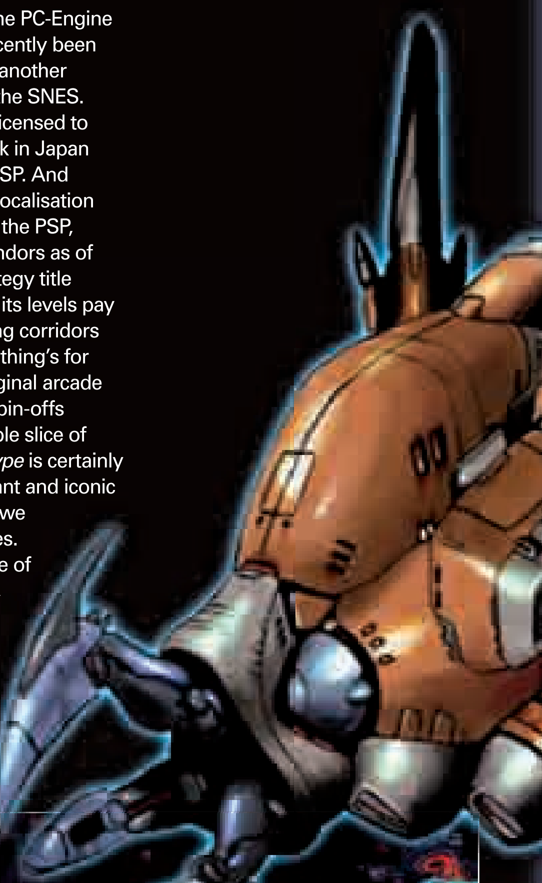
» The underwater boss from stage two has a certain familiarity about it.

soundtrack to be context-sensitive depending on the environment of the R-fighter on the battlefield," he says. "The PlayStation's capabilities were a great help. For instance, in the second stage, the BGM changes depending on whether the R-fighter is above, on the surface, or below the water. There are other subtleties in the game audio-wise, which add much to the game's atmosphere."

On its release in Japan in late 1998, fans were jubilant about the polished accomplishment of *R-Type Delta*. The small Irem development team, with its limited exposure to 32-bit console programming, had produced a game still regarded by many fans as the finest *R-Type* since the arcade original. One of its highest accolades was a Gold Medal award from the influential magazine *Famitsu*. The game was snapped up by Sony for distribution in Europe and Australia, and published by Agetec in the US the year after its domestic debut. A shame then that the niche appeal of the shooter genre by this stage of the Nineties affected sales. "We were happy with the critical reception of *R-Type Delta*, especially the *Famitsu* Gold Medal, and the game was successful and sold well, but I'd have to say that we were hoping for more," Kujo admits. But luckily for the fans, this wasn't quite the end of the *R-Type* story. "After *Delta* was released there were many requests for another *R-Type* title," says Kujo, "but Irem management wanted to pour resources into genres other than shooting games. Still, the requests continued, so we decided to produce one more game to tell fans 'this is the final *R-Type*…'"

An unashamed tribute to Irem's loyal fans, particularly in its astonishing 100-strong array of 'collectable' playable ships, the PS2 sequel *R-Type Final* hit Japanese shelves in summer 2003. "Most of the staff that worked on the *R-Type Delta* project also participated in the *R-Type Final* project, including myself," says Kujo. "It was good having the experience we gained as a team on *Delta*, as well as the great respect we hold for *R-Type*, which transferred well to *Final*." A fond and accomplished farewell for the franchise, with superb hi-res visuals echoing *Delta*'s neon cityscapes and sub-aquatic Bydo lairs, *Final* included many features transferred from its predecessor, such as the DOSE system and versions of the Albatross and Cerberus fighters.

R-Type's star still shines brightly in the memories of many gamers, and although Irem isn't producing any more shooters per se, the brand continues to enjoy a level of industry presence. *R-Type III: The Third Lightning* received a Game Boy Advance conversion in 2004, and was made available on Wii Virtual Console last year, joining the PC-Engine version of *R-Type*. It has recently been followed by *Super R-Type*, another title originally released on the SNES. *R-Type Delta* was recently licensed to Sony's PlayStation Network in Japan for download to PS3 and PSP. And *R-Type Command*, the US localisation of Irem's *R-Type Tactics* for the PSP, should reach American vendors as of May 2008. Although a strategy title rather than a pure shooter, its levels pay homage to the side-scrolling corridors of the original games. One thing's for sure, the Bydo-blasting original arcade games and such console spin-offs as *Delta* are an indispensable slice of videogaming history. "*R-Type* is certainly one of Irem's most important and iconic brands," admits Kujo. "So we are very proud of the games. *R-Type Delta* is our favourite of the modern *R-Type* games, but we still have a great fondness for the original arcade *R-Type*." And here at **Retro Gamer**, you won't catch any of us arguing with that.



» The return of another *R-Type* boss (Gomander). He's a bit more mobile this time around.



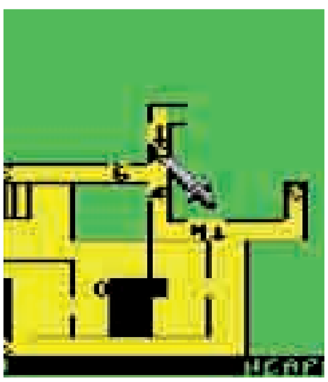


WHY YOU MUST PLAY… HEROQUEST

COMPUTER ADAPTATIONS OF BOARD GAMES WERE USUALLY DULL, BORING AFFAIRS, BUT THEN GREMLIN GRAPHICS' HEROQUEST CAME ALONG AND SPOILED EVERYTHING



» [DOS] The adventurers prepare to head off on the first of many quests.



» [C64] The 8-bit map used in *HeroQuest* is rather crude, and as a result it's often difficult to work out exactly where you are.



» [ZX Spectrum] As well as some decent music, the 128K version had some nice art.

Board games have had a somewhat chequered past – hey, we've just made a joke – when translated to the medium of videogames, with many failing to capture the essence of what made them so darn enjoyable to play in the first place.

Often slow-paced and invariably dull to look at – although we couldn't even imagine a 360 version of Scrabble looking anything less than rubbish – there's usually little reason to gather around your TV screen with a group of friends when you can simply huddle around the real thing instead.

Three cheers then for Gremlin Graphics' *HeroQuest*, a wonderful adaptation of the Milton Bradley/Games Workshop board game that, unfortunately, never seems to get the acclaim from gamers that it so rightly deserves.

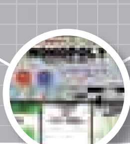
As well as effortlessly capturing the atmosphere of the original, Gremlin's version takes away all the hassle associated with the board game by simply taking care of everything for you. There's no setting up of the board every time you start a new quest, no double-checking instructions when a mate insists that Ladril the Elf can actually search for secret doors as many times as he wants; you can simply concentrate on enjoying the game. And what an enjoyable game it is.

While the Spectrum and Amstrad offerings suffer slightly due to their underwhelming looks and slower speed, all available versions perfectly capture *HeroQuest*'s excitement of heading down into a

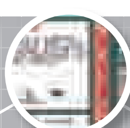
TIMELINE



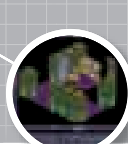
BACKGAMMON
Version Featured: ZX81
Year Released: 1982



MONOPOLY
Version Featured: ZX Spectrum
Year Released: 1985



A QUESTION OF SCRUPLES
Version Featured: C64
Year Released: 1987



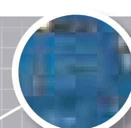
SPACE CRUSADE
Version Featured: DOS
Year Released: 1992



SPACE HULK: VENGEANCE OF THE BLOOD ANGELS
Version Featured: Windows
Year Released: 1996



RISK II
Version Featured: Windows
Year Released: 2000



MONOPOLY/BOGGLE/ YAHTZEE/BATTLESHIP
Version Featured: DS
Year Released: 2006

THE CONVERSIONS



1. COMMODORE 64
Although its rather drab, blocky appearance makes it look pretty ugly, the Commodore 64 version does offer several strong points over its 8-bit counterparts. It is far quicker to play, icons are a lot easier to navigate and you don't need to continually press the on-screen arrows to move characters.

2. AMSTRAD
Oh dear, this isn't very good at all. The Amstrad CPC version of Gremlin Graphics' *HeroQuest* not only features the same cluttered display as its Spectrum counterpart; but it also suffers from an extremely dull colour palette. All in all this is a very disappointing conversion and easily the worst available.

3. AMIGA
The Amiga version of *HeroQuest* is leagues ahead of its 8-bit little brothers. Characters are far more detailed, icons are well placed and much easier to navigate, while the front end boasts superior presentation that mimics the cards from the original game. A very strong conversion.

4. SPECTRUM
The Spectrum effort is nice to look at, with a fair few colours and easily identifiable sprites. Frustratingly though, icons are placed far too closely together, meaning it's all too easy to select the wrong one. Interestingly, the 128K version has a better icon layout, decent music and little images when fighting enemies.

5. ATARI ST
Bar some slightly better sound, this conversion of *HeroQuest* is otherwise completely identical to the Amiga version and boasts the same slick interface and detailed visuals. Having everything presented with detailed cards also helps replicate the feel of the original board game.

6. DOS
It's quite tricky to get running nowadays – we're rubbish with DOSBOX – but this is definitely the best version of *HeroQuest* that's available on any home system. It looks great, runs at a lovely smooth pace and features the same excellent icon layout as the Amiga and ST versions.

deadly dungeon with a set of friends and recovering the treasures found within. This is mainly down to the computer versions not only utilising the exact same quests, but also due to the player only being able to see a small section of the board at any one time (in the original game, whoever controlled the creatures wouldn't set up a room until players had entered it). There's nothing more thrilling, or terrifying, than entering a room and discovering that it's jam-packed with deadly monsters all baying for your blood and the computer versions capture this perfectly.

Perhaps the greatest boon that *HeroQuest* has over its cardboard peer is that you no longer need to persuade a group of mates to sit down and play it with you. Indeed, the actual interface is incredibly slick and makes navigating *HeroQuest*'s dungeons an absolute cinch. Turns simply consisted of you rolling dice to determine how far you can move, moving around the tiled board and then attacking any nearby foes. If no foes happen to be nearby you can simply look for secret doors, traps or treasure. Once all four available heroes have had their turns, play is handed over to the computer who controls any surviving monsters.

It's a simple concept but one that works extremely well and while some aspects do niggle – there are no attack, spell or trap animations, the map isn't always easy to read and the difficulty factor goes through the roof on some of the later quests – *HeroQuest*'s blend of action and strategy is so finely balanced that it isn't really an issue.

It doesn't matter if you loved the original board game or have never even heard of it, as *HeroQuest* is a fine enough strategy adventure in its own right. The fact that it's actually been expertly converted from a board game when so many other efforts have failed just makes it that little bit sweeter.

CHOOSE YOUR HERO

SIGMAR THE BARBARIAN

The mighty warrior is able to withstand more physical blows than any other character and is a real force to be reckoned with. Being an unintelligible brute, however, he's unable to cast any spells.

GRUGNI THE DWARF

He may be small in stature, but Grugni can withstand almost as may blows as Sigmar. He also has an aversion to magic but has the handy ability to disarm traps.

LADRIL THE ELF

Although Ladril the Elf is rather handy when it comes to physical combat, especially when using a sword, his biggest asset is most certainly his ability to cast a number of powerful spells.

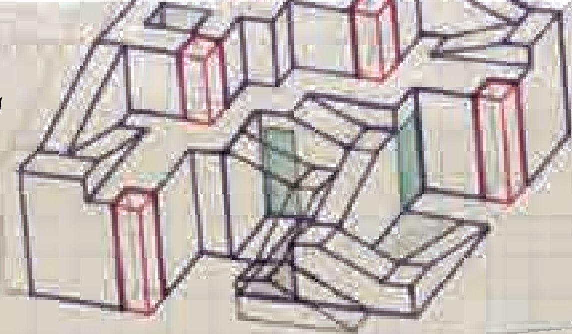
ZOLTAN THE WIZARD

Don't bother getting into any fights with this geezer, as he'll go down quicker than Cristiano Ronaldo. Instead use his awesome spells to rain death on the enemy from afar.

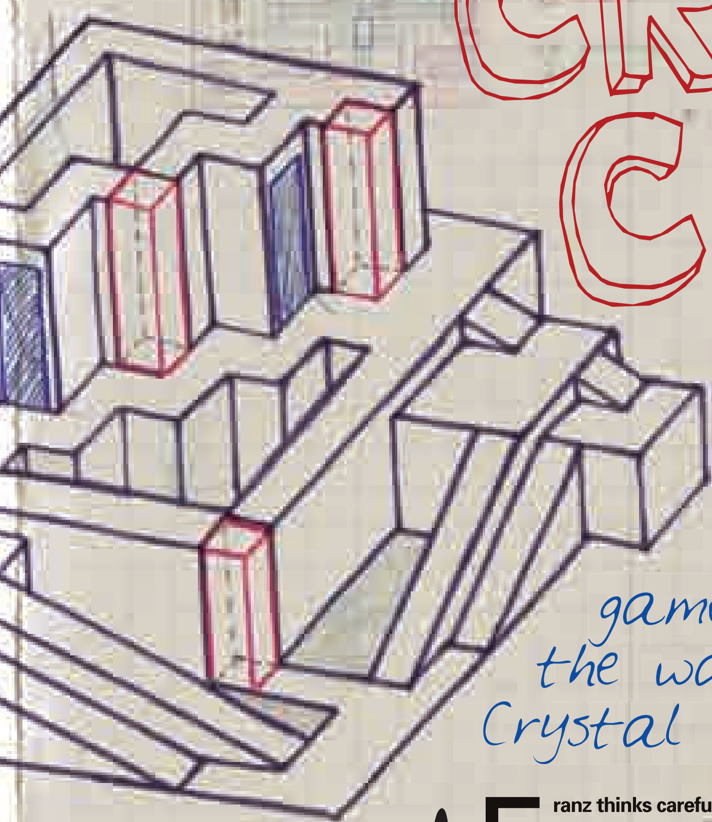
TRY THIS NEXT

If you're still hankering for some board game shenanigans then why not take a look at *Space Crusade*? It's essentially a sci-fi equivalent of *HeroQuest* – both games were by MB/Games Workshop and converted to home computers by Gremlin Graphics – but trades armour and axes for spacesuits and guns. It uses a similar isometric-style setting, but has vastly superior visuals, is far easier to navigate and plays at a much quicker pace.





CRYSTAL CASTLES



» Dave Ralston's designs for the 'Nasty Tree' screen.

When Franz Xaver Lanzinger created a game as distinctive and memorable as his own name, he bewitched many a gamer. Paul Drury ventures inside the walls to discover how the stately Crystal Castles was built

IN THE KNOW



- **» PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- **» DEVELOPER:** FRANZ X LANZINGER
- **» RELEASED:** 1983
- **» FROM THE SAME PUBLISHER:** MAZE GAME
- **» GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- **» EXPECT TO PAY:** £750+ FOR A MINT CABINET

Franz thinks carefully before answering. "Well, I had studied his work. I have some of his pictures on my wall in the office right now. And that one maze called Impossible Staircase uses the same technique of building something in 3D that looks possible but isn't… Yes, Escher was a very strong influence."

Retro Gamer has tentatively ventured into chin-stroking territory. The distinctive visuals of *Crystal Castles*, those strange 3D structures that rise majestically from a flat plane as each level begins, do recall the work of the Dutch graphic artist famed for his playfulness with perspective. Is this perhaps the first example of a game designer with clear artistic ambition?

"No I didn't think of myself as an artist back then," chuckles Franz, self-consciously. "I was just trying to make a fun game. Deal with the technical issues and fix the bugs! I was and still am a gamer and it's all about that."

Sorry, bearded academics, but Franz is one of us. After dropping out of a mathematics degree at the University of California at Berkeley to pursue a career in scientific research, Franz had been leading a double life. "I was programming by day, playing arcade games by night. I had a group of friends and we were playing a lot of games in 1980 and 1981. One of our group, Brian McGhie, got hired by Atari because he was part of a focus group recruited from a local arcade field test. He recommended me. And Atari were the big cajones, so to speak. Like working at Disney if you wanted to do animation."

While Franz's prowess on *Centipede* must have looked good on his CV, it was his experience in coding in assembly, still the primary tool for developing arcade games in those pre-C days that landed him the post. He joined in early 1982 and began work on the project that over the next year and a half would evolve into the sparkling *Crystal Castles*, a game with no obvious antecedents. Well, the gem-collecting premise may owe something to *Pac-Man*'s pill-popping, but discovering it began life as a follow-up to *Asteroids* comes as a surprise.

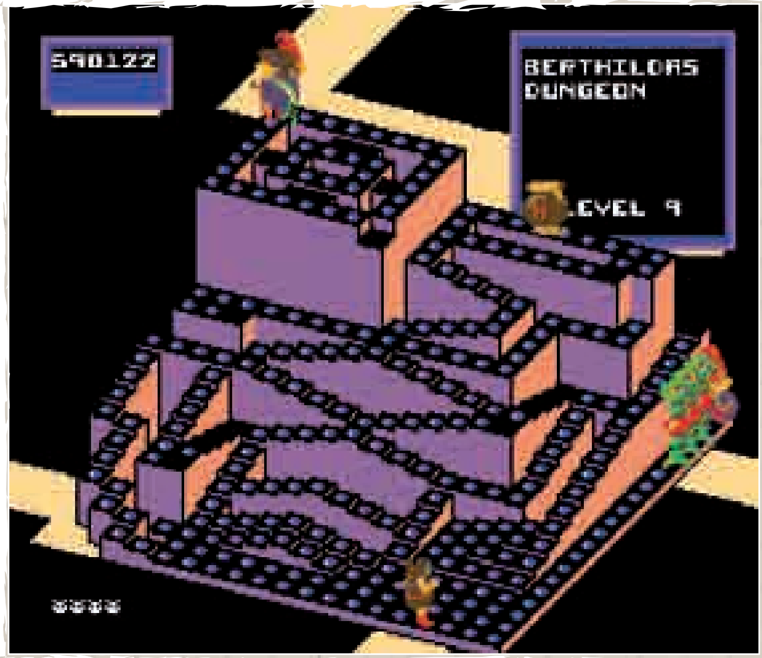
"It was internal politics. In order to get a project off ground, you had to choose an approved project from the 'Big Book'. Atari did these annual brainstorming sessions for the entire engineering department and would write down game ideas in this book. When I arrived, I looked through the book and picked one."

Franz's fingers fell on *Toporoids*, a re-imagining of Atari's seminal vector blaster. The new employee was without a full development system for the first few months and so spent his time mucking about on a mainframe, creating 3D backgrounds for the space-based shooter – the 'topology' part of the game's rather strained title.

"Almost from the beginning, the backgrounds looked like they would in the final game," he says. "They were data driven – I'd type in numbers for the heights and colours of these 3D structures, the timing of lifts, the placement of tunnels and so on. It evolved from day to day. I remember having 2,000 versions of the game. I'm not kidding! Every day I'd make four or five versions. I'd try each one out and an hour later, do another one."

Experimentation was the key here, as was the addition of a small ET-like creature, which allowed Franz to scurry across the architecture of his mysterious isometric world. Once he had scattered gems across the landscape for the little fella to collect, he could see the potential for a very different sort of game than interstellar rock reduction.

"That's when it took a different direction to *Toporoids*. You could see there was a fun game in there, but we didn't have a theme or enemies. A group of us threw around ideas and came up with a fairytale theme. The witch, the



» Bentley's nemesis got her name when Franz was driving down Highway 101 and saw a sign for 'Mathilda Avenue', which he thought 'sounded like a witch'. He played around with it a little and the evil Berthilda was born…



WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS

While all the game code for *Crystal Castles* was written by Franz alone, he did have some input from the two graphic artists Atari employed at the time. "Barbara Singh did the bulk of the motion objects and Susan McBride also did a few," he notes. "You'd call them sprites now – the bees, trees, ghosts and, of course, the bear." This female touch may go some way in explaining Bentley's rather effeminate garb of red boots and red sash, topped off with a rather fetching hat (which, to be fair, does provide five seconds of invulnerability from enemies, including, hopefully, the fashion police).

Fellow Atari game designer Dave Ralston also helped design some additional mazes after prototypes were placed in local arcades. "At the first arcade field test there were 12 different mazes that I had designed and feedback from players was that they wanted more. More variety. Dave helped with the more complicated mazes you see later in the game. I still have his original drawings. I plan to give them back, erm, any day now!"

Fortunately for us, Franz has kindly scanned these sketches before returning them to their author and **Retro Gamer** can exclusively publish them here. We particularly love the scribbled message left for Franz… hope you had a good afternoon, Dave. Nice work.

moving trees, that idea of them being alive like in the *Wizard Of Oz*… and the bear. You find them in the woods."

And we all know what bears do in the woods, though the unlikely hero of this tale was careful not to cause offence. "He was going to be called Bear Braveheart until someone in marketing decided it was politically incorrect because of Native Americans," says Franz. "There was something going on with the Atlanta Braves at the time and the word 'Brave' wasn't considered kosher. They had a competition open to all in engineering to rename him and Bentley won. Not my suggestion!"

Our newly christened, PC-friendly leading bear was now free to snaffle up the tempting crystals and progress through the game's 37 screens. He wasn't without competition though, as equally avaricious gemeaters roam the mazes, though it's possible to eliminate them mid-gobble. Add to this Berthilda on her broomstick, wandering trees, crystal balls and an angry swarm of bees and things can get pretty crowded. This is when you thank the game's incredibly speedy and precise controller for allowing you to outmanoeuvre your adversaries with a well-timed spin of the glowing trackball.

"I was playing a lot of *Centipede* and *Millipede* was in development in the lab next door. I liked the trackball controller. I felt comfortable with it and the management said I could choose – trackball or joystick – so that's what I went with and didn't really think of the implications. In retrospect, having a trackball is a hindrance as it's hard to get the feel right with a different controller…"

True, designing the game around a joystick may have made future home conversions easier to implement, but many of the nuances in gameplay – the way Bentley can take corners at a blistering pace, his pirouetting descent

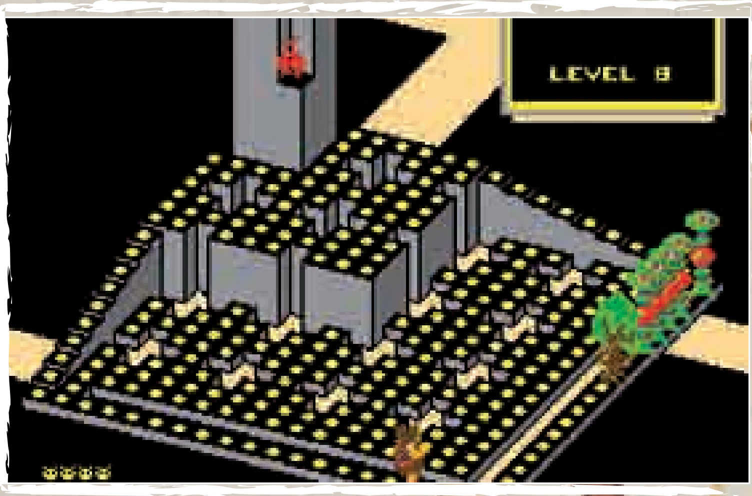
"In 1983, I spent $2,000 in the arcades. Being a gamer and being part of the gaming culture allowed me to make good decisions about game design" FRANZ KEEPS IT REAL

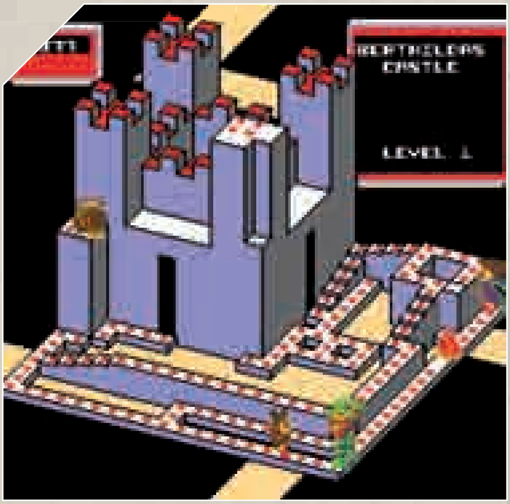


» The ornate cabinet and that lovely glowing trackball.

» A beaming Franz, still making games a quarter of a century on.









» Converting *Crystal Castles* for the home was never easy, but this valiant VCS effort did actually support the console's trackball controller.



of crystal encrusted towers and the rhythmic swirls of expert players as they swallow up fields of gems with some nifty finger work – all rely on the esoteric charms of the trackball. Besides, Franz was making the best game he could for gamers of the day and though he'd crossed over into game development, he wasn't one to forget his roots.

"I felt it was important I kept up my arcade playing. In fact, I remember using a tax write-off of $2,000 for money I spent in arcades in 1983! Research and development. I don't feel bad about it. I could have played all the games I wanted to at work for free, but I felt it was important to go to the arcade. Being a gamer and part of the gaming culture was helpful. It helped me make good decisions about game design. It pushed me in the right direction."

His immersion in that culture, where your status was determined by the position of your initials on the high-score table, is beautifully evident in the very architecture of *Crystal Castles*. The three-lettered tag of the day's best player is incorporated into the towers of the opening level and Franz's favourite screen, entitled Hidden Spiral, is formed from the initials of three of his gaming friends, including Brian 'BBM' McGhie who'd helped him break into Atari in the first place. Look closely at Berthilda's Palace and you'll see 'EDG' and 'MAR' carved into the floor, standing for Eric Ginner and Mark Robichek respectively, both high-scoring heroes from the Golden Age previously featured in **RG**.

"I watched Eric Ginner play *Tempest* and even with the scheme that let the advanced players select which level to start from, it still took him half an hour to get to the level of play he wanted to be at," recalls Franz. "I wanted you to get there right away! That was part of my motivation for putting the warps in *Crystal Castles*. Plus, I wanted to do something to keep the game times low. Put something in there to ensure the game time was five minutes or less. Basically, monetary greed!"

From his hours in the arcade Franz learned how to meet the needs of the expert, while not alienating the newbie and hid three warps at strategic junctures in the game. And of course, everyone loves uncovering secrets. The first time you guided Bentley to the rear corner of the opening screen, jumped, and then watched in wonderment as your furry friend rocketed into the ether leaving those early levels behind was a revelation for many a young gamer.

Franz smiles. "I wanted something you'd learn. The beginner wouldn't know about them and eventually he'd get a message about the warps. Most people think you had to read about them in magazines, but I put messages in the game. If you play straight through and get past the place where you can warp to, there's a message telling you."

This innovative feature pre-dated *Mario*'s Warp Zones of course, but it wasn't the only piece of prescient thinking. *Crystal Castles* is the first arcade game to offer a distinct ending. This was something very new for

THIS IS THE END

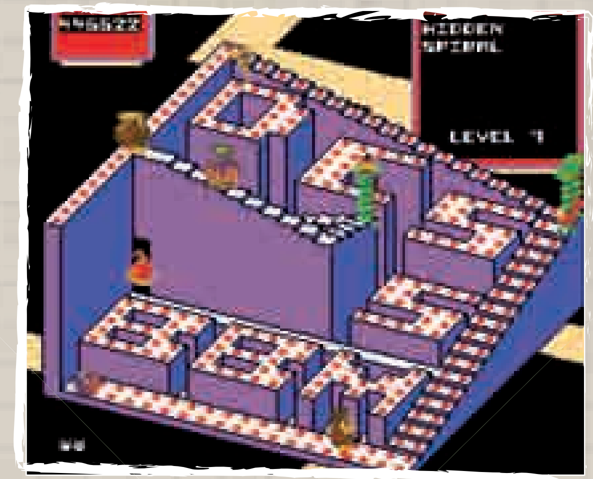


Franz had to fight his corner when it came to having an end to his game, but the opposition didn't come from the players pumping in the quarters. "They were fine with it," he explains. "Basically, management had had huge success with games like *Asteroids* and *Centipede*, which didn't have endings, so why rock the boat?" Ever the diplomat, Franz eloquently stated his case through a detailed two-page memo, arguing the benefits of giving *Crystal Castles* an end screen. It's a fascinating historical document, touching on ideas such as if videogames are aspiring to tell stories, they should have satisfying conclusions in the same way novels do, and we are delighted that Franz has now chosen to publish his 25-year-old document on his website. Go to www.actualentertainment.com/crystalcastles where you can read it in its entirety and also download the very sweet *Gubble HD*, for a price of your choosing. While you're on the wonderful web, please visit Mark Alpiger's www.classicarcadegaming.com for his superlative pages on *Crystal Castles*. "He's a tremendous player and he really knows the game. Better than I do, in fact," acknowledges Franz. "He's been a great inspiration over the years. His website is amazing. A lot of great information. And yeah, I've seen the footage of him playing *Crystal Castles* with his feet on the extras of *The King Of Kong* DVD." We featured Mark in issue 36 and have had the rare privilege of smelling his sock after he defeated Berthilda. At **RG**, we go the extra mile.



» Franz tackling his own creation in 1986. Photo courtesy of *CC* aficionado Mark Alpiger.





» The Hidden Spiral stage contains the initials of fellow gamers Desiree McCrorey, Sam Mehta and Brian McGhie.



» Franz played around with perspective on the game's final screen, which was entitled rather appropriately 'The End'.

an action game and Atari's top brass needed convincing.

"Management saw that they got a lot of free publicity from people playing *Asteroids* and *Missile Command* for days on end," says Franz. "It was all about marathoning, but I felt strongly that the score in a game should be meaningful. I felt it was important to have an ending…"

Franz persuaded his bosses through a detailed two-page memo (see boxout 'This is the End') and thus those triumphant players who beat Level 10, Screen 1, are rewarded with a congratulatory message, a rating determined by how many lives they have left ranging from 'Amazingly Good' to 'Video Wiz', a bonus score based on speed of play and a rather fancy animation that fills the screen with reproducing rectangles.

It's another sweet touch in a game full of little details. The outlandish use of pink, maroon, peach and pea-green in a palette that would please Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen (Franz exclusively reveals he put a counter in the game so the colour scheme changes every 1,000 games). The naming of each level adds real atmosphere, as you first discover Berthilda's Dungeon, the ominous Doomsdome or the helpful hint of Hidden Ramp. The cute cartoon speech bubble that contains Bentley's last words when he cops it. And then there's the cabinet itself, complete with illuminated trackball and elaborate side-art.

Crystal Castles turned heads when it arrived in 1983, but it was to be Franz's only contribution to the arcades he so loved. He spent the following year working on a *Gremlins* arcade game, spending time on the film set and meeting Spielberg, but then left Atari over a dispute about the lack of residuals paid to coin-op developers for sales of home conversions of their games. It remains his biggest regret.

He left the industry for five years before joining Tengen in 1989, where he converted *Toobin'* and *Ms Pac-Man* for the NES. He went on to form Bitmasters, who released *Krazy Kreatures* and *Rampart*, before stepping up to the SNES for *Championship Pool* and *Final Four Basketball*. Then in the mid-Nineties, he teamed up with old arcade buddies Mark '*Frogger*' Robichek and Eric '*Centipede*' Ginner to set up Actual Entertainment. "The idea was to do a sequel to *Crystal Castles*," he says. "We couldn't get the rights, so did a game that was similar but different enough to avoid legal problems. And I was very happy with *Gubble*. I think it's a great game. In fact, I recently did *Gubble HD: Anniversary Edition* and I'm trying to get it out on other platforms. I think the DS would be a good platform for *Gubble*."

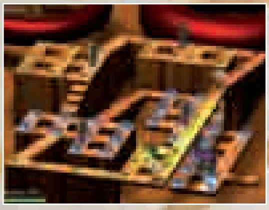
So the seasoned game designer has returned to the spiritual successor of the game that launched his career. Does his first-born remain his favourite, though? Franz laughs. "Yes. It had the most impact and originality and I'm proud of it. I saw it in *The King Of Kong*, which was a big thrill. Actually, *Crystal Castles* was the first game I ever wrote. I'd done a lot of programming – I'd been doing it since 1971 – but nothing I did at school or work was a game." Debuts don't come much more auspicious…

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MS PAC-MAN
SYSTEMS: NES/SNES/GENESIS
YEAR: 1990

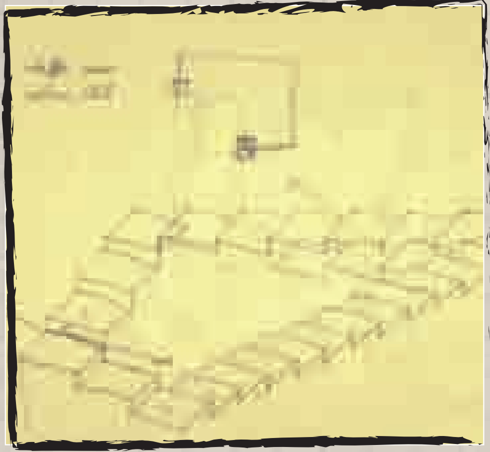
KRAZY KREATURES
SYSTEM: NES
YEAR: 1990

GUBBLE (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1996



"Atari were the big cajones. It was like working at Disney if you wanted to do animation" FRANZ ON GETTING TO HANG OUT WITH THE BIG BOYS

» This rough sketch by Franz shows the debt he owed to Escher and clearly influenced the 'Impossible Staircase' and 'The End' screens of *Crystal Castles*.



» The spiritual sequel of *Crystal Castles*: *Gubble HD*, available from Franz's website www.actualentertainment.com.



» Having fought and won, the player is rewarded with plenty of points and lots of blocks…



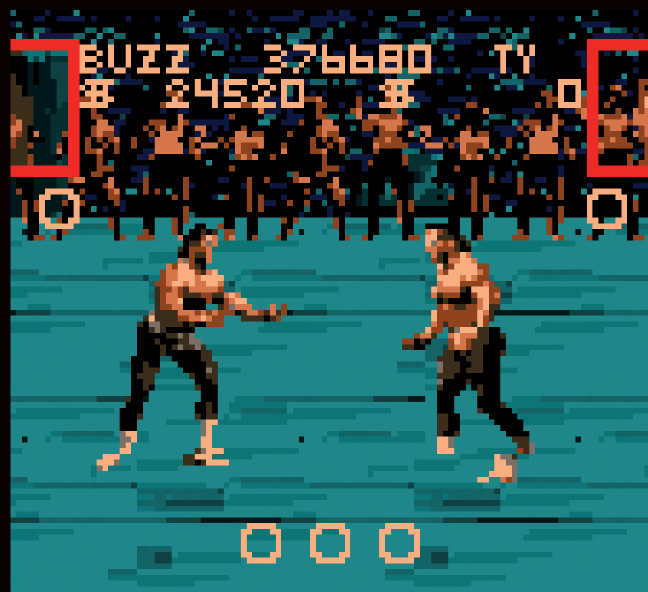
RETRO SHAMER

PIT-FIGHTER

WELL, YOU VOTED FOR IT, AND BY A LANDSLIDE PIT-FIGHTER HAS BEEN SELECTED TO BE THE FIRST CRAPPY VIDEOGAME TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE AS OUR READERS' RETRO SHAMER. WANT TO GET A SAY ON THE NEXT GAME TO GET LAMBASTED INSIDE TWO PAGES? THEN REGISTER ON THE RETRO GAMER FORUM AND START VOTING. STUART HUNT STEPS INTO THE CRAPPY WORLD OF FIGHTING INSIDE A PIT, AND GETS VICIOUSLY KNIFED IN THE BACK FOR HIS TROUBLES

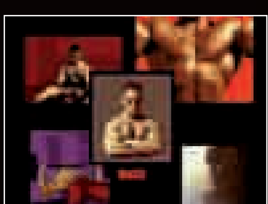


» The Mega Drive port, as you might expect, looked alright, but, as you might expect, it played like gash.



» The Lynx version is the best handheld version available, and in all honesty, it's not that bad.

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** TENGEN
» **DEVELOPER:** ATARI GAMES
» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5-£10
» **WHY PLAY THIS WHEN YOU CAN PLAY:** GAROU: MARK OF THE WOLVES

***Pit-Fighter* – greasy muscular men and women fighting for cash and notoriety in a warehouse full of characters from Kevin Smith films. Is it a tragic blood sport for fighters with joint-tensing arthritis or a mosh pit for steroid junkies? Seriously, it took a special kind of magic to balls up *Pit-Fighter*. On paper it had all the right ingredients to be a gritty, nasty little fighting game that would turn kid's heads like Jessica Rabbit's legs and anger parents like forgetting to turn the lights off and leaving doors open.**

The arcade game was a 'No 1 Arcade Hit' apparently and set precedents for being the first fighter to use fuzzy and jerky photorealistic fighters and for allowing three people to fight at the same time. Instead, what we got was a videogame that did for illegal street fighting what BA seems to do with new terminals: over-hype and under-deliver, and in equally seismic proportions. It's a game that somehow manages to go toe to toe with *Rise Of The Robots* and makes *Primal Rage* – a fighting game about dinosaurs – actually look like a videogame.

There exists no good or worth inside the pits of *Pit-Fighter*, none at all. Quite amazingly, not one of the many painfully simple elements that are seriously worth considering when putting together a half-decent beat-'em-up ever actually makes any sort of appearance in the entire game.

Buzz, Kato and Ty, three generic po-faced videogame characters made to sound like herbs and spices are your combatants. Two of which, Kato and Buzz, are not even worth wasting money or button-wear on because they truly suck at their chosen vocation.

To be fair to the fighters, it doesn't help that the combat in *Pit-Fighter* basically consists of randomly mashing a button, while praying that your opponent is standing on the exact same plane as you, and also that the game chooses to acknowledge that a collision has just taken place.

Now, when you're making a fighting game, it might be a good idea to actually watch a fight, rent a few martial arts films or ask someone to throw a fist while you sit there and jot down a few notes. An attack that looks remarkably like your man is practising the art of spraying deodorant under his arm and a kick that looks like a muscle spasm simply makes for these





» Given the technical limitations of the Master System, its version looked and played like a bonus level from *Target Renegade*.

jerky and awkward-looking scraps in *Pit-Fighter*. There really is no better word to describe the fights in *Pit-Fighter* than scraps, because that's what they are: a scrappy, messy two minutes that seem to involve three egotistical meatheads starting a fight in a Soho nightclub after a protein shake and Absinthe binge.

This conveniently leads us to the ugly and annoying spectators, or revellers. Essentially faceless and eerie-looking spectres made from a peculiar compound of black and grey sprites that make them look like rather unsettling night terrors. And not only do they look and dress like jerks but they act like them too, by sticking the knife in, literally, and stabbing you in the back should you unwittingly stumble towards them during a fight.

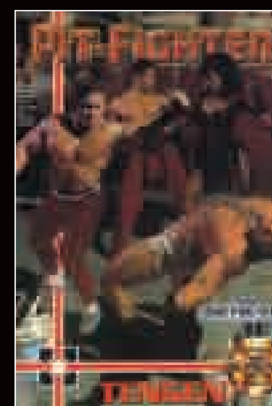
Probably blinkered by the fact that *Pit-Fighter* looked and (quite probably) played better on 8-bit micros than it did in the arcades, it received some pretty respectable percentages, getting an astonishing 80% in *Your Sinclair* and a shameful 90% for the Atari ST and 82% for the Mega Drive in the pages of *C&VG*. The SNES port, however, is probably the worst version you can lay your hands on. It exposes the horribleness of the game brilliantly and then outdoes itself by giving you one life to finish the entire game and adding a ridiculous health meter that works similarly to darts. You and your opponent are given a three-digit number and you have to whittle their number down with attacks, via a hand movement – and some luck – until one of you is left with a big fat zero and one of the characters turns grey. It's a brilliant summation of what happens to you when you pay 40 quid for this rubbish and participate in one fight in this heinous game.

"PIT-FIGHTER DID FOR ILLEGAL STREET FIGHTING WHAT BA SEEMS TO DO WITH NEW TERMINALS: OVER-HYPE AND UNDER-DELIVER"

POINTLESS PART

When was the last time that you witnessed the winner of a fight being paraded around on a wooden pallet and lofted into the air by a forklift truck? Yep, thought so. That's right, a blatant disregard for health and safety in the workplace took a backseat for nonsensical visual score-tallying in *Pit-Fighter*, and the results were as exciting as watching a stranger trying to tease a splinter from their thumb.





For such a crummy game, *Pit-Fighter*'s box art is pretty iconic. The blocky orange font that looks like iron girders formed to make the game's title, and a picture of Buzz in a ridiculous half-standing, half-squating posture, while punching a guy in a nappy to the ground is just terrible. In the background we also have Kato and a woman dressed like Ozzy Osbourne having a staring contest. This game sucks.

A WORD FROM THE MAIN CHARACTER

Grrr, me is Buzz, and me like fighting, prancing in front of the mirror and going to the gym. I love breaking my arm muscles to make them grow back stronger and working out while watching *Pumping Iron* in my underpants. I tried to buy it on Blu-ray last Saturday – after going to the gym, picking a fight with everyone inside, beating everyone to a bloody pulp, earning everyone's respect and then getting off with everyone's girlfriends – but I was told by some pipsqueak sat behind the counter at my local branch of HMV that it hadn't been released yet. Now you listen up Sony, Buzz wants it and Buzz gets what he wants… or else it's face-smashing/girlfriend-romancing time!



THE MAKING OF...

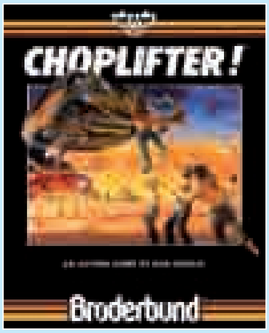
CHOPLIFTER!

Marrying shades of Defender with then-current events, Choplifter!'s simple, fast-paced and topical gameplay captivated a generation and subsequently spawned a number of sequels and imitators. Craig Grannell chats to the game's creator, Dan Gorlin, finding out how he came to code his classic title using his trusty Apple II





IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** BRØDERBUND SOFTWARE, INC

» **DEVELOPER:** DAN GORLIN

» **RELEASED:** 1982

» **PLATFORMS:** APPLE II (FEATURED); CONVERTED TO: ARCADE, ATARI 5200, ATARI 7800, ATARI 800/XL/XE, COLECOVISION, C64, MSX, NES, MASTER SYSTEM, TI-99, VIC-20

» **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

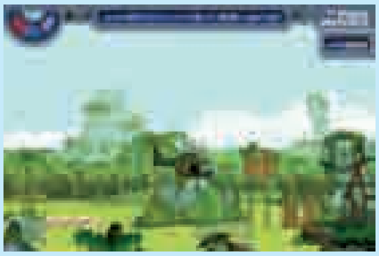
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+

Today, in an era inundated with combat games, it's hard to imagine an 8-bit system re-creating the tension and risk associated with wartime rescue, but *Choplifter!* comes close. Dan Gorlin's debut game was released for the Apple II in 1982, eventually finding its way to a plethora of formats, and its simple, highly refined gameplay engrossed a generation. Your role is to pilot a helicopter deep into enemy territory, in order to rescue 64 kidnapped UN delegates and whisk them to the safety of a nearby US outpost. The snag: the enemy isn't one to be caught napping. While you've got to make do with a helicopter rather prone to blowing up if it so much as gets nicked by enemy fire, your adversaries have numerous tanks, fighter jets and air mines with which to thwart your mission.

During the early Eighties, games such as *Choplifter!* were created for any number of reasons. Some programmers were excited by new equipment and were keen to experiment; others wanted to re-create the arcade experience at home. However, *Choplifter!* is perhaps the only title that arrived largely due to a sluggish real-estate market. "I wrote the game on an Apple II while sitting around trying to sell my first house in Los Angeles," reveals Dan. "I was goofing around at first, but once I started to get deeper into it and things started to move around the screen, I began to think that maybe I could make some money with the result."

Dan's background held him in good stead for creating a game on the hoof. Years of "pottering with computers and maths" primed his mind for programming, and while his initial experience with computers was with basement mainframes with punched cards, the early Eighties saw affordable computing devices hit the mainstream. "I bought a programmable calculator and started playing around with it, writing stupid little games that tried to do graphics with text characters," says Dan. "So when I finally got my hands on an Apple II, it was super fun to work with!"

With *Choplifter!*, the game's central concept and scenario didn't arrive by accident. "I was playing with a helicopter, trying to get the feel right, because helicopters always fascinated me, and I started showing it to people," begins Dan. "A kid who was working on my car was a big *Defender* fan, and when he saw my work he immediately suggested the game should have some men to pick up." Dan hotfooted it to the local



» **[Online]** *RAF Global Rescue*, an online Flash viral game by Kerb (kerb.co.uk) shows how *Choplifter!*'s legacy lives on.



» **[C64]** All guns blazing in the workmanlike C64 port, with our hero under fire from a tank, a jet and an air mine.



» **[Atari 7800]** Weird squashed tanks patrol the summery desert surroundings in the somewhat unplayable Atari 7800 conversion.



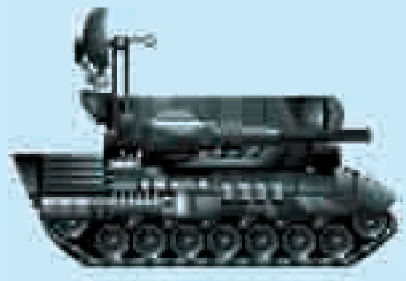
» **[Apple II]** Hostages safely home, the chopper takes off once again, its pilot wondering why everything's coloured so strangely.

laundrette, which boasted a *Defender* cab. He says this was the first time he realised the blocky little characters were supposed to be men. "In general, I knew nothing about arcade games at the time and still don't," he laughs. "But I liked the idea and started adding little men and other things to my game."

As the *Choplifter!* we know slowly began to form, real-world influences crept in. Outside of *Defender*, Dan's relative indifference to gaming meant other videogames didn't inspire him, but due to the game's new-found rescue theme, the Iran hostage crisis inevitably did. This long-running and extremely tense international crisis, prompted by students taking over Iran's American embassy, in support of the revolution, lasted over 14 months, and was big in the news during the period Dan was creating his game. "It must have moved me towards the hostage idea subliminally," he muses. "But I really didn't analyse it much from a marketing perspective, which probably helped *Choplifter!* evolve into a fun game."

With *Choplifter!* being Dan's first proper game, he was constantly figuring out what was achievable within the limitations of the hardware. Somewhat ambitious ideas gave way to ones grounded in reality. "I was actually trying to do a 3D game at first, but as I realised the limitations of the machine, I got realistic pretty quickly and made it a side-scroller!" Dan remembers that the entire game was coded in assembly language and that the graphics were drawn on graph paper and entered in hex. We ask about breakthroughs, and Dan considers for a moment, deciding that the sheer speed and smoothness of the game is perhaps its greatest technical achievement. "If I made any breakthroughs technically," he says, "it was just squeezing that kind of speed and fluidity of motion out of a 1 MHz 6502. Keeping the frame rate high was very challenging, and I had to analyse where the time was being spent without having any decent tools for doing so."

Another challenge was in getting the control of the helicopter just right. To enhance the fun side of things, Dan was keen to embrace a non-standard controller for the Apple II. "I loved having a linear joystick," he says, "and didn't write a keyboard-only version of *Choplifter!*, because I thought it would suck. When it went to market, this was a risky thing to do, but it turned out that people started buying joysticks in droves, because the game was successful, and so it worked out fine for everyone!" He adds that a lot of joystick manufacturers and sales reps insisted on buying him drinks at trade shows in those days.



"A KID WHO WAS WORKING ON MY CAR WAS A BIG DEFENDER FAN, AND WHEN HE SAW MY WORK HE IMMEDIATELY SUGGESTED THE GAME SHOULD HAVE SOME MEN TO PICK UP" DAN GORLIN

Dan was also keen to get a semblance of reality into the controls. Whereas most games of the time provided direct, strict control over your on-screen character, the likes of *Defender* had integrated real-world concepts like inertia, which proved more fitting for flight-based games. "The introduction of Newtonian physics was kind of unusual at the time," says Dan, adding that it was 'cheated' a lot to make it fun. "I tried to make the helicopter feel like a real-world physical object, because that's a natural thing to play with for the gamer, but in terms of real-world helicopters, the physics of *Choplifter!* aren't even close to a simulation."

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

AIRHEART
SYSTEMS: APPLE II
YEAR: 1986

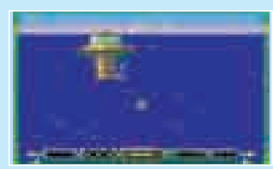
TYPHOON THOMPSON (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: ATARI ST, AMIGA
YEAR: 1989



» **[Mac]** Although never making it to modern platforms, *Choplifter!* variants do exist, such as the depicted *Chopper* (majicjungle.com/chopper.html) for Mac OS X.

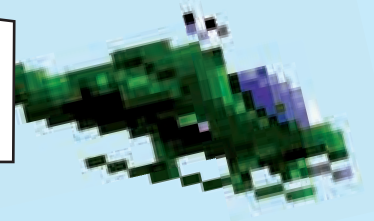


» **[Atari 8-bit]** The original Atari 8-bit release is so astonishingly ugly that we couldn't even bring ourselves to play it, so here's the title screen instead.



THE MAKING OF...

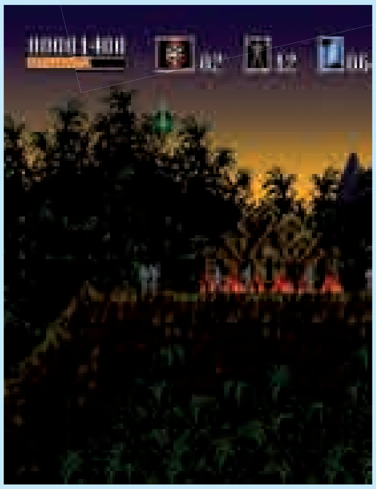
CHOPLIFTER!



THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

A quick read of *Choplifter!*'s backstory reveals that the nasty evildoers holding your comrades hostage aren't any old evil empire, but the (fictional) Bungeling Empire. Although Brøderbund didn't create further *Choplifter!* titles itself, the Bungeling Empire subsequently made an appearance in two rather famous titles. In the classic 1983 platform game *Lode Runner*, the blurb states that the power-hungry and repressive Bungeling Empire has nicked a load of gold from 'the peace-loving people' (whoever they might be – perhaps the UN's run by hippies by that point), and your goal is to reclaim the lot. And in Will Wright's debut, *Raid On Bungeling Bay*, the Bungeling Empire's upped its game from stealing lumps of precious metal to creating an artificial intelligence hellbent on total conquest, with its ultimate aim being the destruction of civilisation as we know it. Blimey! Maybe we shouldn't have been so eager to blow up dozens of Bungeling tanks in *Choplifter!*…





» *Choplifter III* on the SNES ramped up visual quality, but lost the simple gameplay that made the original so compelling.



»[Apple II] With astonishingly bad timing, the hostage flees from the burning building, yelling, "I'm saved," only to see the chopper shot down in midair. Oops.

In the end, *Choplifter!*'s other aspects also took on a typical kind of Eighties arcade game hyper-reality. You become a solitary hero, pitted against swarms of enemies, and the enemy's number and capabilities grow each time you successfully return to base (which you must do at least four times, due to your chopper only having capacity for 16 of the 64 hostages). At first, you only contend with tanks, but on your second trip, fighter jets swoop in, missiles firing at your chopper with deadly accuracy. Next, air mines join the party, and these devices subsequently learn to shoot at you on the fourth trip (by which time you're also fending off pairs of jets and tanks). As if that wasn't enough, hostages are vulnerable to fire, and emit a yelp if you should be careless enough to land on (and squash) them.

Although *Choplifter!*'s basic gameplay mechanics were perhaps somewhat typical for the time, its scoring system was not. Instead of players spending time downing jets and bombing tanks, emphasis is squarely placed on perfectionist rescue: three numbers detail hostages aboard the helicopter, those already safe, and those who've met their untimely demise. "I don't like the idea of 'scores' when it seems like you're trying to tell a story, and so I never really wanted to have a score element at all," explains Dan. "But of course it was important to know how many of the little guys got back safely, and so that became the score. The number of planes and tanks you blew up seemed irrelevant to me, and so I never kept track for the player." Even long-time fans admit that a perfect '64 saved' is hard to achieve, and Dan reckons that's exactly the way things should be, "It's critical for games to be easy to learn and difficult to master. That's what I wanted with my first game and I think it worked out really well. I playtested it all the time, of course, because it was all about tweaking things until they felt perfect."

Dan's perfectionism paid off. An early development build was sent to Brøderbund, and the company, excited about discovering a new talent, flew Dan out and gave him plenty of encouragement. By the time the game was completed, it was being promoted and exhibited at trade shows, and kids were lining up to play it. "The industry was a lot of fun in those days, but it got a lot more serious as soon as the money started rolling in," remembers Dan. "I was swept up in this emerging super-industry, and got to be a superstar for 15 minutes or so. I'm glad I was old enough at the time – 28 – to take it all in perspective, because I knew a lot of younger guys in the same situation who had trouble with their personal lives because of all the money

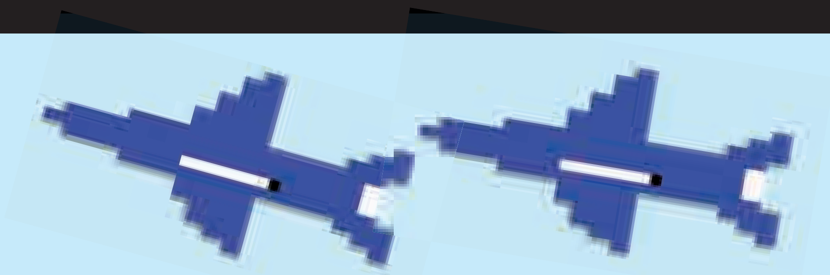
> "IT'S CRITICAL FOR GAMES TO BE EASY TO LEARN AND DIFFICULT TO MASTER. THAT'S WHAT I WANTED WITH MY FIRST GAME AND I THINK IT WORKED OUT REALLY WELL" DAN GORLIN

» [VIC-20] Bizarre-o-*Choplifter!* on the VIC-20, with plenty of flicker, suspicious scrolling, and oddly dive-bombing fighter jets.



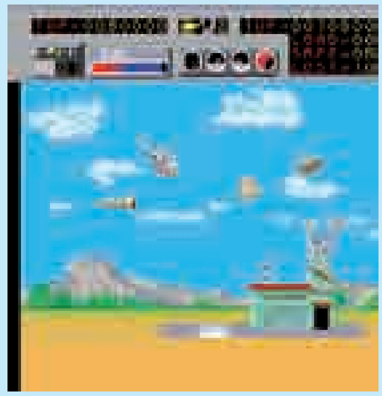
» [C64] Seriously, little hostage dude, this is no time to start waving at the camera and yelling, "Hi, mum!"







» [SNES] As *Choplifter!*'s version number increased (this is *Choplifter III*), so did the size of the tanks – much to the annoyance of the chopper pilot.



» [Arcade] Enemy jets don't honour territorial airspace in the arcade version – as if Sega's effort wasn't hard enough…

and attention. It wasn't all fun and games for everyone…"

With the Apple II release in the bag, *Choplifter!* was converted to a slew of other platforms, including the C64, various Atari consoles and the ColecoVision. Unusually, it also spawned an arcade game, a feat achieved by only a handful of home computers and console games during the Eighties, where conversions from relatively high-powered arcade platforms were the norm. "With the computer versions, I either did them myself or hired guys to do them at my company, and so I kept tight control over them," says Dan. "But the arcade game was a straight licensing deal with Sega. They were kind enough to put my name on it, but I didn't have anything to do with its development, and it really was a different game."

Dan recalls that Sega sent him a cocktail version of the game – "a nice gesture on their part" – but it was around this time that his association with *Choplifter!* ended. Although subsequent games using the *Choplifter!* moniker name-checked Dan in the credits, he not only didn't have anything to do with the games, but hasn't even played one. Of real and supposed pretenders, Dan does note that he caught *Fort Apocalypse* when it was released, and remembers how some people considered it a clone of his game – a notion he's happy to put to rest, "I saw it, and it looked fun and different to *Choplifter!*, and so I never had a problem with it."

These days, Dan is about as far away from his gaming legacy as it's possible to be. He doesn't work on games or with computers (instead concentrating on another of his college loves, performing and teaching West African drum and dance), and notes that he no longer owns the rights to *Choplifter!*. "I couldn't tell you who does, and I don't think anyone else could either, and so I guess I don't really care what happens to it," he jokes. However, as a final word, we get a glimpse of what might have been had market conditions not changed so dramatically a decade after Dan took those first steps on his Apple II. "I did start building a PC version of *Choplifter!* about ten years ago," he reveals. "It would have been amazing. Unfortunately, industry problems forced it to be scrapped… I regret that it never made it to the PC after all these years."

"I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF 'SCORES' WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE TRYING TO TELL A STORY, AND SO I NEVER REALLY WANTED TO HAVE A SCORE ELEMENT IN CHOPLIFTER!" DAN GORLIN

A CHOP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Although Dan only worked on the original *Choplifter!*, the title lived on, initially in the form of officially licensed conversions and sequels, and then in remakes and games clearly inspired by the original Apple II creation. In the former camp, Sega's arcade title is perhaps most well known. More a remake than a conversion, its brutal difficulty is off-putting, although the increased variety with regards to enemies and terrain offers a stab at increased longevity. The trend largely continued with the *Choplifter!* sequels for Sega and Nintendo consoles, the most advanced being *Choplifter III* on the SNES, complete with the kind of terrain that would make a mountaineer homesick, and so many adversaries that you wonder why you're having to fight it out alone. On the plus side, your chopper no longer explodes from a single hit, and you can't land on hostages and crush them.



ALSO IN THE SERIES

CHOPLIFTER II: RESCUE SURVIVE
(GAME BOY – 1991)

CHOPLIFTER III
(GAME BOY, GAME GEAR – 1993)

CHOPLIFTER III
(SNES – 1994)

» [Atari 8-bit] What a difference a few years makes. The late-Eighties Atari 8-bit *Choplifter!* is lovely in almost every way.



» [Apple II] A sobering end for our hero's tale: burning to death in enemy territory, while the game bluntly points out the obvious.



KID ICARUS

ALMOST THE PITS



- **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- **RELEASED:** 1986
- **GENRE:** PLATFORM
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID ON THE NES OR 500 POINTS ON VIRTUAL CONSOLE



HISTORY

There are some who regard *Kid Icarus* as an unsung hero of the NES. But while I'd be the first to admit that the game looks and sounds pretty – thanks to it running from the same guts as *Metroid*, and having that sublime Tanaka music. For me, it's ruined somewhat by some frustrating little design flaws.

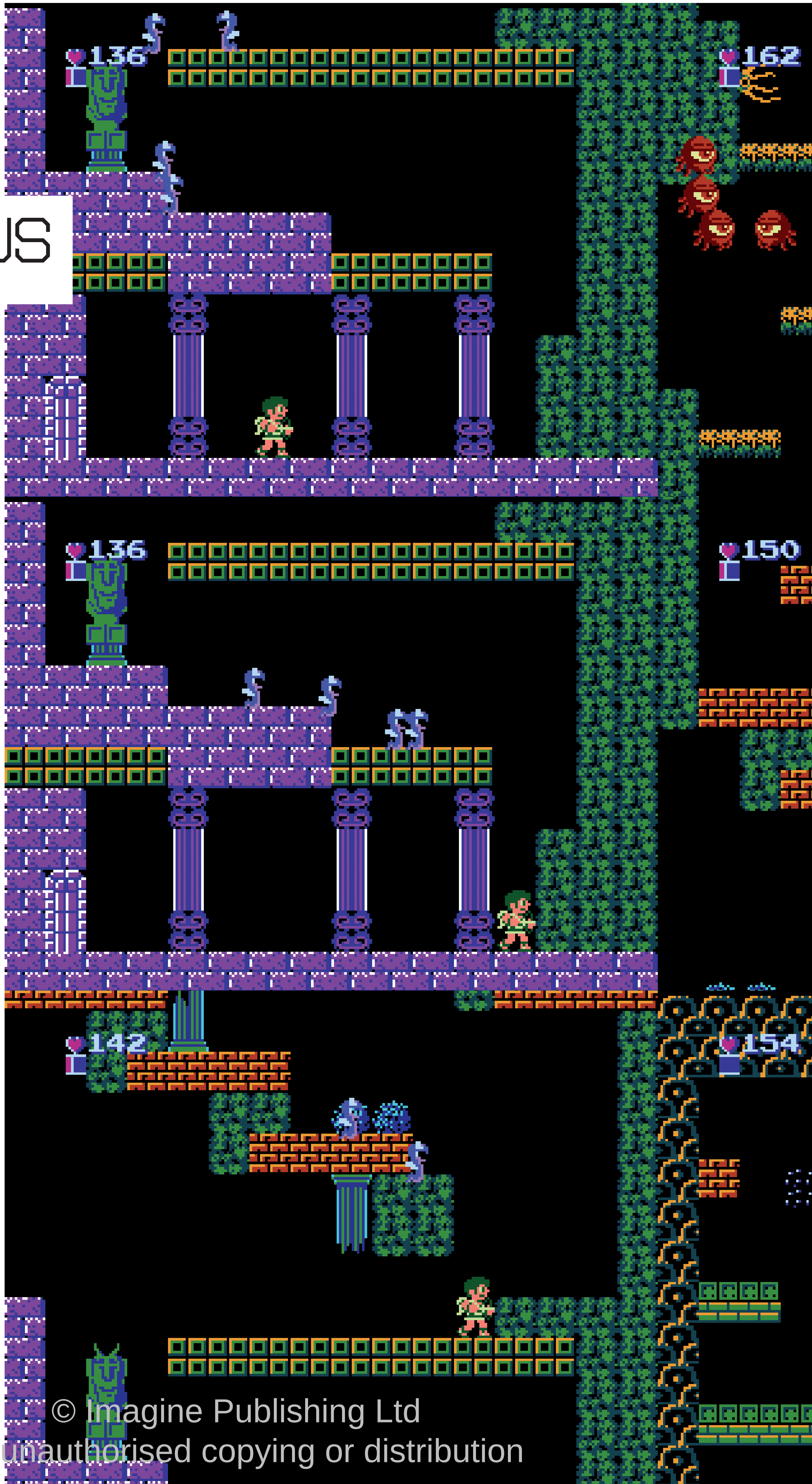
Kid Icarus still demonstrates that good ol' Nintendo template; creating a videogame based on three central characters: a good God, a bad God, who's been turned into an evil medusa by the good God, and an unlikely hero with a stupid name.

Essentially trying to cram platform, shooting and RPG elements into one game and, for the most part, succeeding, *Kid Icarus* sadly seems to undo some of that greatness by throwing up a troupe of brilliantly drawn, but annoyingly cheap enemies that make you want to rip the cart from your NES and kick it at a furnace.

Pit, your angelic hero, has to face off against an army of skeletons that will absorb a ridiculous amount of arrows, silly sporadic squids that miraculously appear from the base of the screen at the most maddening of moments and plenty of stupid drops that kill your character outright. But thanks to its levelling up and shopping elements, the further you get in the game the easier it gets.

For the quest, Nintendo has bestowed us one measly life, which was probably its attempt to impart this jarring sense of realism. But when you're playing a videogame about an angel quashing a bunch of flying eyes and eggplants with arrow heads, surely it's all pointless.

The game isn't a complete tool, however, as when you die, you can always fall back on its 24-digit, case-sensitive password system. Nintendo would soften the blow though by putting it to use on some brilliant cheat codes. Just input '8uuuuu uuuuuu uuuuuu uuuuuu' if you want to see the game's final *Parodius* stage – and see a fully powered Pit take to the skies and face off against a giant eyeball and its pet dragon.



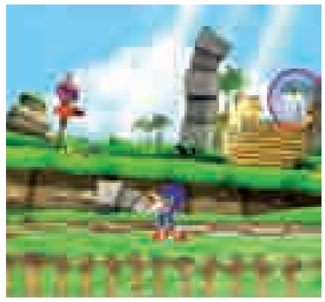

151
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RETRORATED



SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS







» Some brilliant old-school Sega characters and environments make an appearance in *Sega Superstars Tennis*.



» Dr Eggman is an utterly stupid name and if we had our way the name would be banished forever. It's Dr Robotnik damn it.

INFORMATION

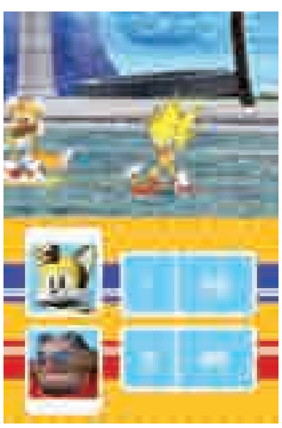
- **SYSTEM:** DS
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

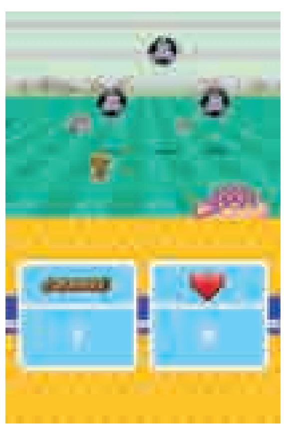
With a roster of classic Sega characters, each with their own unique Newton face-palming alter egos, and a 'party section' serving up a few brilliant Sega-themed mini-games, as far as offering a fun and quirky game of tennis, that's exactly what you'll be getting with *Sega Superstars Tennis* – a game which harks brilliantly back to the days of *Smash Court Tennis* on the Super Nintendo.

Now while the game looks and plays superbly and the Co-op and Doubles modes are playable enough, the game is, unfortunately, spoiled by a couple niggling flaws (the Nintendo DS's buttons for one, which, admittedly, is not the game's fault) and another, which, once you've discovered it (which we did in about five minutes) mars the difficulty somewhat.

Basically, there's a very simple cheat/flaw (whichever way you want to look at it) that you can exploit to make winning matches incredibly easy. Too easy, at times. Whenever you're serving the ball to your opponent, if you direct the ball (using the D-pad after the ball has been hit) to the furthest right-hand or left-hand side of the court (depending on which side you're actually serving to) you will nearly always force your opponent to outstretch their arm and therefore pathetically return the ball back to you. Then, all you need to do to win the point is effortlessly place the ball into the huge chasm of space that opens up, and watch as your opponent pants and puffs their way to the opposite end of the court and, more often than not, fails to return the ball.

We finished the game with four of the wonderfully nostalgic Sega characters in about half an hour using this method, and when you start to get good at it you can apply this technique to the matches where you're returning service as well. Overall though, the game is still immensely enjoyable, and the multiplayer and Sega-themed bonus games – *Space Harrier* and *Virtua Cop* are the clear standouts for us – ensure that *Sega Superstars Tennis* is still worthy a purchase.





THE SCORES

Presentation **90%**

Top-notch, one of the best-looking DS games we've seen.

Aesthetics **88%**

It's crammed full of classic Sega-goodness.

Playability **75%**

Very addictive, but a few flaws let it down.

Longevity **85%**

The Co-op mode will probably keep you playing for a very long time.

Value for Money **84%**

There's plenty here to keep you busy. Well worth £30.

Overall **86%**

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: RING OF FATES

INFORMATION

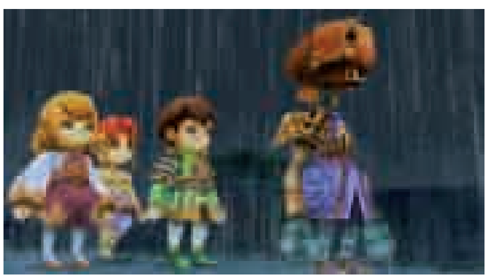
- **SYSTEM:** DS
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

Ever since we first played through the beautiful, but flawed, *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* on the GameCube, we've been itching for a sequel.

While *Ring Of Fates* is not a true sequel as such, it does dispense with many of the elements that frustrated us in the original game, and as a result ends up being a surprisingly polished adventure. Indeed, the first thing that hits you is just how impressive it all looks. Using an engine that looks extremely similar to *Final Fantasy III*'s, you're instantly transported into a truly magical-looking world that's predictably filled with all manner of nasty creatures. Music is also of a very high standard and there's a surprising amount of speech, but what's impressed us most is the actual gameplay, which is a world away from the tedium found in the original game.

While it's no longer possible to play with three other players, the game has been greatly sped up because no one has to carry an annoying pail around with them. Puzzles are admittedly rather simple and usually consist of nothing more than moving an object from A to B, but this simply adds to the old-school charm that seeps through Square Enix's latest game.

There are certainly issues to be found – you'll continually revisit the same locations and the multiplayer isn't as honed as we would have liked – but if you're looking for an old-school adventure to play on the way to work and you have already completed *Phantom Hourglass* you won't currently find anything better.







» Fights are in real-time, so grab yourself a sturdy sword or axe and get twatting.

THE SCORES

Presentation **85%**

Square has been creating some brilliant games recently and this is no different.

Aesthetics **94%**

Stunning-looking visuals that do the DS proud.

Playability **81%**

Very easy to get into but it is a little limited.

Longevity **78%**

The quest is rather short but there are plenty of secrets to discover along the way.

Value for Money **82%**

It's no *Final Fantasy III*, but still worth picking up.

Overall **85%**

ZOO TYCOON 2

INFORMATION

- **SYSTEM:** DS
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** THQ
- **PLAYERS:** 1

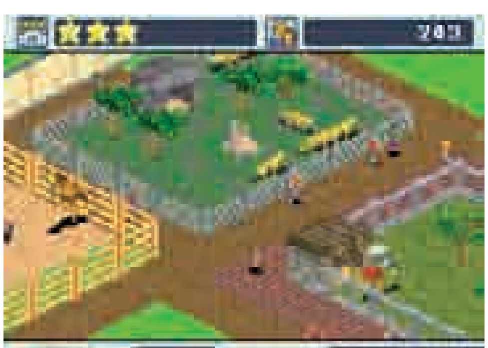
From the moment *Theme Park* burst onto the scene with its rollercoaster building, vomiting passengers and price fixing, many developers have been ready to create their very own spin on the popular genre. *Zoo Tycoon 2* is a typical example of this, and while its structure and style are no different to EA's recent *Theme Park* remake, it's not quite up to the same standards.

While there are plenty of new gameplay mechanics on offer – mini-games are now in place, which enable you to feed and nurse various animals – they're not always well implemented, and, as a result, this sequel often feels like a missed opportunity.

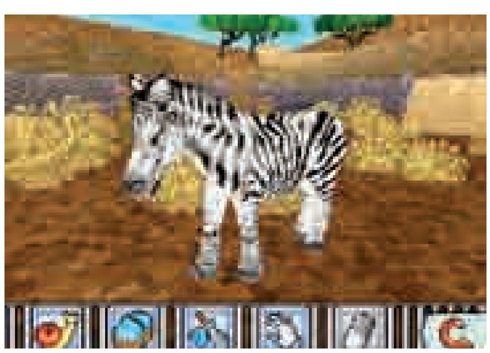
Then there's the clunky control system to consider, which isn't always as responsive as we would have liked, and let's face it, when you're balancing several tasks at once in a management sim, you want to be able to do them as painlessly and quickly as possible.

It's a real shame that these little niggles constantly rear their ugly head, as this is a massive improvement over the original Nintendo DS game and proves to be a welcome alternative if you're not too keen on creating your own theme park.

Zoo Tycoon 2 may have vastly improved visuals, dinosaurs (no, really) and an in-depth campaign mode, but, unfortunately, it's just not enough. The DS may be the perfect home for the management sim, but we're still waiting for that killer app. Maybe EA will release *Theme Hospital*…



» As with any good sim it's possible to set the prices of tickets. Put them too high, however, and you won't get any customers.



» The 3D models are a big step up from the original, but they don't help disguise *Zoo Tycoon 2*'s niggly issues.

THE SCORES

Presentation **69%**

Nice and solid and surprisingly easy to navigate.

Aesthetics **72%**

The 3D animals look pretty cool and there's plenty of detail on offer.

Playability **74%**

It's fun, but poorly implemented in places.

Longevity **80%**

It's going to take a fair while to complete all the missions on offer.

Value for Money **72%**

It's not the best strategy game ever, but is worth a look.

Overall **71%**

REVIEW

NAMCO MUSEUM DS

NIGHT AT THE NAMCO MUSEUM… ONCE AGAIN

INFORMATION

- **SYSTEM:** DS
- **PRICE:** £19.99
- **RELEASED:** NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4



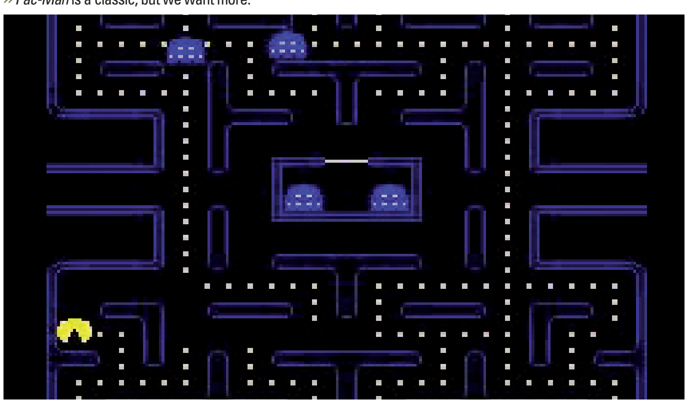
This, as you might expect from having that ominous word 'museum' and that other word 'Namco' in its title, is a portable reboot of the *Namco Museum* packs that were released for the PSone. And as you might expect, being Namco, for the most part it contains a large percentage of well-flogged dead horses. In this pack you're getting predictable arcade rips of *Pac-Man* (should be no real shocks there), *Galaga* and *Galaxian* (it should have gone with *Galaga '88*), the hugely overrated sheet-metal shoot-'em-up *Xevious*, and police mouse caper *Mappy*.

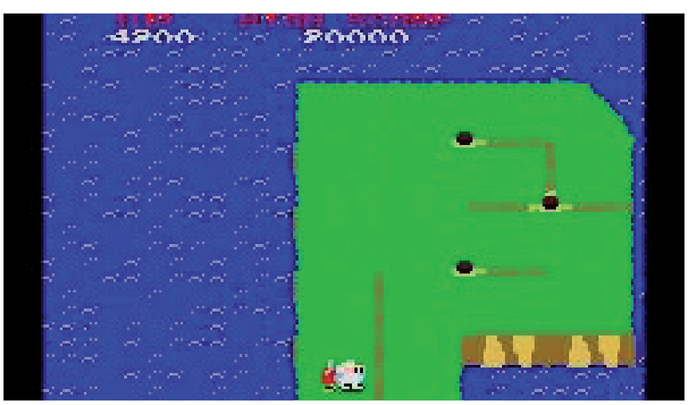
The fresh faces are *Dig Dug II*, which is absolutely bloody marvellous, and a rather drab-looking RPG called *The Tower Of Druaga* (which admittedly I've never actually played). Now I know you're probably thinking, 'Stuart you truly are a lazy beast, how can you review a compilation pack without actually taking the time to play all of the featured games', and you're right, it is shameful, but there's a reason behind this blatant idleness: *Pac-Man Vs.*.

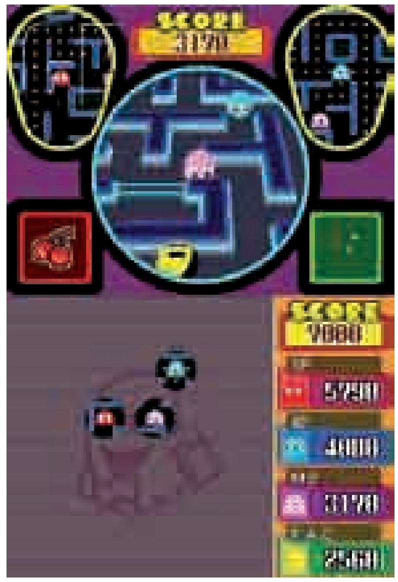
Seriously, this retro pack is worth buying solely for this inventive little multiplayer game that Namco has cleverly tapped onto the end of this pack, allowing four people to partake in a *Pac-Man* melee, with one person playing the titular yellow disc and the others taking the role of three of the four ghosts. As you would expect, playing as Pac-Man it's your job to chomp round the game map cleaning up all the Pac-Dots while your mates try to catch you. Cunningly though, Pac-Man's view is restricted to a small circular letterbox and cameras show the whereabouts – but not in relation to the map – of the ghosts. Whoever catches Pac-Man first becomes the titular pill-popper and the winner is the first person to reach so many points.

Putting the gaming aside for one moment though, the pack's options screen feels very similar to the fantastic *Konami Arcade Classics* pack (reviewed in issue 46) so, as you might expect, there's plenty of options and customisation to be found in playing with the photorealistic dip switches of each game. Additional tweaks allow you to add or remove game glitches, change the screen ratio and even unwind by kicking back and listening to a few retro tunes. Finally, it seems, we have in our hands a must-have retro compilation from Namco.

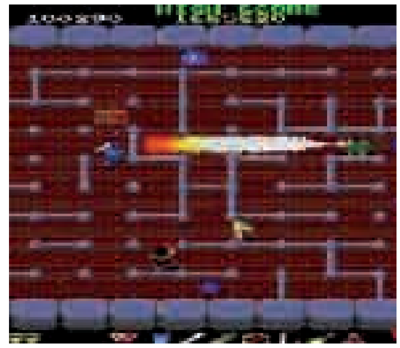
» *Pac-Man* is a classic, but we want more.

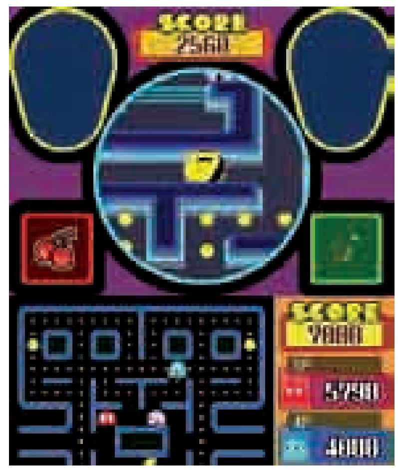


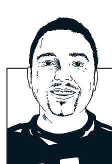




» Stuart may not have played *Tower Of Druaga*, but Darran has and he insists it's a class little game and one he's happy to see here.







OPINION

Oh come on Namco, show us a little love. While there's no denying that *Pac-Man Vs.* remains a refreshing slice of brilliance, Namco has been incredibly stingy with its actual back catalogue. Considering the huge amount of titles it has to draw upon it insists on churning out the same titles again and again. Yes, the presentation is faultless and, yes, the coversions themselves are of a high standard, but we want more Namco. Make sure the second volume has more games on it and we'll be happy bunnies.

Darran Jones

IN SUMMARY

Without the inclusion of *Pac-Man Vs.* this pack would probably be fetching scores somewhere around the mid-sixties mark (and also, I'd probably be able to tell you a thing or two about *The Tower Of Druaga*), but as it stands, with the excellent *Pac-Man Vs.*, this pack is certainly worth the money.

THE SCORES

Presentation **82%**

Not as good as *Konami Arcade Classics*, but it still boasts another quality back end.

Aesthetics **74%**

You can actually feel the arcade wistfulness emanating from the DS.

Playability **69%**

Generally a rabble of the usual suspects, but thanks to *Pac-Man Vs.* you can wave goodbye to eating at lunchtimes.

Longevity **79%**

There's a lot of gaming and tweaking to work through.

Value for Money **76%**

Wholeheartedly worth the cash.

Overall **74%**

REVIEW

THE KING OF KONG



» Billy Mitchell with his hot sauce. Darran was given a bottle by Mitchell a few years back and states it's finger-licking good.

THE CLASSIC GAME GETS A CLASSIC MOVIE





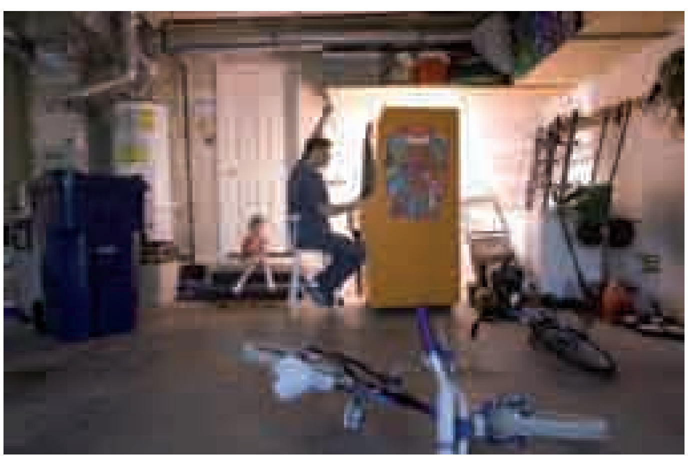
» The director, Seth Gordon.

Here's a thought, tomorrow morning Luigi wakes up and decides he wants to break the current *Donkey Kong* high-score record set by his brother. He goes out, buys a *Donkey Kong* cab, takes a sabbatical from plumbing and locks himself away from the world.

Over the coming months, he works at it, slowly perfecting his barrel jumping, gradually improving his high score until he reaches his goal. He video-tapes this amazing feat and eagerly sends it to Donkey Kong for verification. Donkey Kong watches the tape, agrees it's authentic and posts the score up on his high-score website. But a few weeks later, Toad and Yoshi drop around to Luigi's apartment and check his arcade cab for tampering. Despite finding nothing untoward, someone gets straight on the blower to Donkey Kong, telling him that Luigi's score cannot be deemed legitimate without it being witnessed by a referee. Donkey Kong eventually agrees and decides to strip Luigi of his high-score record, much to his distress. Mario's chuffed, and that's that. But a few years pass and Luigi decides that he's going to have another stab at beating the record, and decides to travel miles of warp pipe to an arcade in a bid to smash the score in front of Donkey Kong.

Before settling down to watch *The King Of Kong* prepare to feel a wave of many different conflicting emotions. You're going to be shocked, your opinions about certain things and certain people might begin to change, and you'll feel privy to a revealing and engrossing side of videogames that you might never have known even existed.

The King Of Kong is, in its rawest form, a classic underdog story. The climatic battle of wills between two *Donkey Kong* supremos, and while the film seems happy to cherry-pick the facts and be edited in such a way that so wants to impart that thinking (you should take the time to visit the forum over at Twin Galaxies, where Walter Day has issued several interesting statements that lambast the film for not telling things exactly how it was), it still proves to be a must-watch movie. Simply put, *The King Of Kong* is one of the most compelling films you'll see all year.



OPINION

I've never watched any film where I've been so entranced by what was happening on screen. While *The King Of Kong* no doubt twists certain facts to its own advantage (as all good documentaries tend to do) it nevertheless remains compulsive viewing and you'll be unable to tear yourself away from the screen for its 78-minute running time. Having personally met many of the individuals involved in the film when they visited a CGEUK event a few years back, it's somewhat bizarre to see them in a totally different, and not necessarily nice, light. Let's hope that our incoming 'Making of' will clear up some of the film's omissions.

Darran Jones



OPINION

Forget *Tomb Raider*, *Mortal Kombat* and all that other pish, *The King Of Kong* is the best videogame movie ever made. It may conveniently sidestep some facts here and there but don't let that put you off, it's just too damn entertaining. I spent the first half of the film laughing at all the ridiculous nerds and the second half close to tears because of the tense drama.

Ashley Day

HOMEBREW RATED

THE INTREPID JASON KELK TAKES ON THE ALIEN HORDES WITH TWO NEW INDIE 8-BIT GAMES: STAR SABRE AND THE TONGUE-TWISTING METAGALACTIC LLAMAS: BATTLE AT THE EDGE OF TIME

STAR SABRE

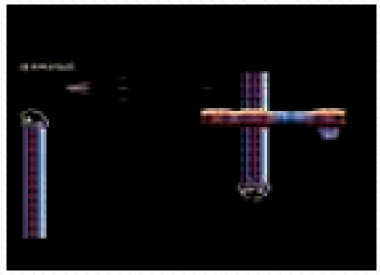
HARDCORE SPACE-BOUND BLASTING FOR THE AMSTRAD CPC



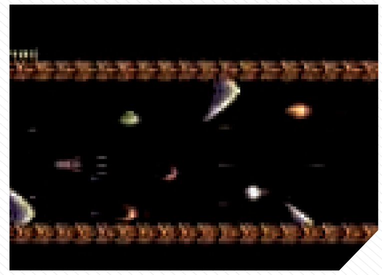
FORMAT: AMSTRAD CPC
DEVELOPED BY: PAUL KOOISTRA
LINK: STARSABRE.BIGBLOG.COM.AU
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE (REAL MEDIA SOON FROM CRONOSOFT)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

***Star Sabre* is almost the archetypal scrolling shoot-'em-up; the player is thrown in at the deep end, facing seemingly impossible odds with only a small but manoeuvrable and well-armed spaceship and their wits available to them as they try to save the universe. And they'll be needed as well, because the four areas are quite heavily defended by a selection of ground- and air-based nasties as well as being punctuated by guardians halfway through and at the end of each stage.**

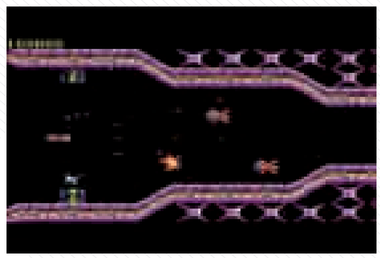
Graphically it's very reasonable, the colours are somewhat garish on a couple of levels but everything is serviceable with a good degree of variety in the attackers and, more importantly, despite getting busy throughout play there are no times when it becomes too difficult to follow what is happening. The only thing that really lets *Star Sabre* down is the lacklustre sound. Developer Paul Kooistra wanted the game playable on any model of CPC as well as a single load and there are four detailed levels, something had to give and sadly that's the audio; effects are simple and somewhat sparse and there is no music at all, which is a huge shame. But after that omission, the rest of the package is something that would happily have passed as a budget release during the mid to late Eighties and possibly even as a full pricer considering the execution. It's slick, moves smoothly, does what it sets out to and is a lot of fun to play as well.



» Turn right at the tower with the gun emplacement.



» Looks good, but the sound lets it down somewhat.

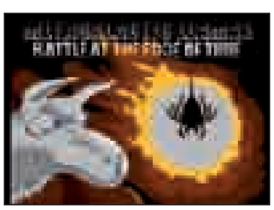


THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 68% Loading picture, nice title page and two play modes.
AESTHETICS: 87% Very nice visually but the sound is weak.
PLAYABILITY: 92% Simple, no-nonsense blasting action.
LONGEVITY: 80% Four long levels, but seasoned gamers will flatten it.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 88%

METAGALACTIC LLAMAS: BATTLE AT THE EDGE OF TIME

LLAMAS, SPIDERS AND THE EDGE OF TIME

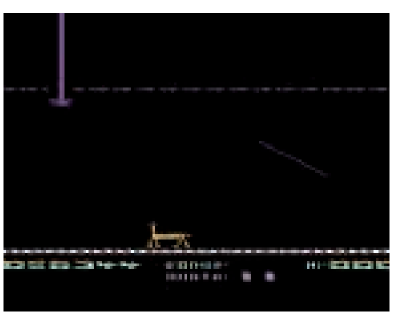


FORMAT: ATARI 8-BITS
DEVELOPED BY: JEFF MINTER AND KAROLJ NAD
LINK: WWW.ATARIAGE.COM/FORUMS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

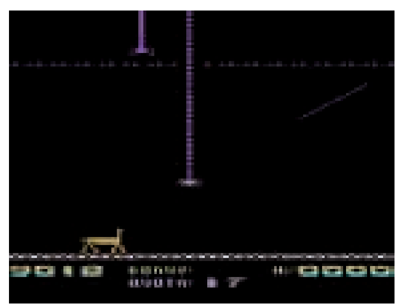
The recently ported *Metagalactic Llamas: Battle At The Edge Of Time* (or just *Meta Llamas*) started life as an all-out blaster for the unexpanded VIC-20 from ungulate-liking developer Jeff Minter and its charm has always been its relative simplicity.

The player's llama stands on a surface at the bottom of the screen with a glowing shield high above its head and can spit diagonally upwards towards the descending cybernetic spiders. If one of these either has its thread shot or breaks it by getting too close to the ground, it drops and mutates into a creature that relentlessly crawls towards your llama. All is not lost if this happens, because carefully aimed doses of llama spit can be bounced off the edges of the screen and the shield (which can be positioned vertically) to pick them off.

And that's pretty much the entire game in a nutshell, *Meta Llamas* features simple blasting action and as the levels progress the spiders appear more frequently but no further elements are introduced. The main challenge with both the original and this straight Atari 8-bit port is learning the control system, how to accurately aim at the attackers either while descending or on the ground and, when more proficient, when to shoot spiders or threads to collect the best bonus. The challenge really comes from learning the controls, the constant barrage of spiders, and becoming adept at controlling the llama and indeed its firing is very satisfying indeed.



» It's not pretty but the gameplay totally rocks.



» A bit late to mention your arachnophobia…

THE SCORES

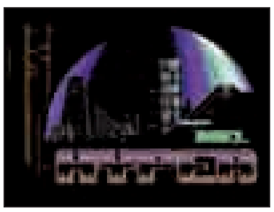
PRESENTATION: 56% Nice intro, simple titles and a difficulty option.
AESTHETICS: 56% Looks and sounds very much like the VIC original.
PLAYABILITY: 83% If you hate spiders you'll be entertained for hours!
LONGEVITY: 62% Simple, challenging and worth dipping into occasionally.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 80%

TWO GAMES, ONE THAT CAME OUT OF THE ARK AND ONE THAT'S LIKE THE ARK

HYPER DUEL

IN SPACE, NOBODY CAN HEAR YOU DUEL

FORMAT: COMMODORE 64
DEVELOPED BY: THE NEW DIMENSION
LINK: WWW.REDESIGN.SK/TND64
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



If there's one game that *Hyper Duel* takes its inspiration from it has to be the air-based battles of *Combat* on the Atari 2600, where two players each take control of a craft and attempt to blow each other to smithereens while avoiding the returned fire.

These games have quite a pedigree, dating back as they do to the original mini-computer action game *Space War*. However, unfortunately, *Hyper Duel* doesn't pay too much attention to a lot of this lineage when it really should have done. The ships are constantly moving forwards while the controls allow the players to fire, speed up and rotate them through a paltry eight possible angles at steps of 45 degrees.



» There can be only one… spaceship.



» Prepare to do battle!

There isn't any of the inertial finesse of *Space War* here.

Visually, the presentation screens are quite appealing, and there are a couple of options to select a slow or fast game and to specify how many kills are needed for a player to win, but the game itself relies on some very simple graphics. Just two ships that look the same apart from colour, with one bullet each, a few status displays in the corners of the screen and a poorly executed star field to fill the otherwise empty area. That emptiness reflects the entire game, there's very little to it, no bonuses or other objects in the play area to make things more interesting and those poor controls. In short, there isn't anything here worth the effort of persuading someone to play against you.



» The excitement is killing us…

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 66% Nice intro, titles and a couple of game options.
AESTHETICS: 51% Weak sprites and that weak star field.
PLAYABILITY: 44% Awkward, overly responsive controls.
LONGEVITY: 23% Not much fun unless someone else wants a go…
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 33%

THE PAIRS ARE GONE

THE ANIMALS WENT IN TWO BY TWO



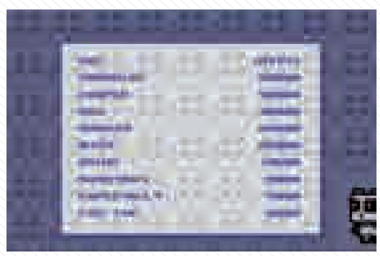
FORMAT: ATARI ST
DEVELOPED BY: PARADIZE
LINK: PARADIZE.FINAL-MEMORY.ORG
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

***The Pairs Are Gone* is based on a mini-game from the recent *New Super Mario Bros* on the DS and, as the name might suggest, it's a puzzle game where the requirement is to find pairs of matching tiles and remove them – what makes it a little different, however, is how the remaining tiles react when a pair are removed.**

The tiles, which all feature stylised pictures of animals, are arranged in a five-by-five square on the screen and when the player selects two matching tiles, which can be adjacent horizontally, vertically or diagonally, the remaining tiles move to fill the gap. So if one is removed from somewhere within the second row, the tile sitting at the left side of the third will move up and across to the right.



» The ark must be getting pretty full by now.



» 103,747 – something for people to aim for!

This unusual movement is interesting, although not reading the instructions can result in players staring at the screen in bemusement for the first couple of games! It is an attractive screen to be staring at though, nothing amazing but the entire game is nicely presented with those stylised graphics, nicely rendered in pastel colours. Control of the game is courtesy of the ST mouse (although there are a few screens requiring a key press) and it contains 25 levels in total with new animals being introduced to the mix as the game progresses. Overall, *The Pairs Are Gone* is enjoyable and would almost be relaxing if it wasn't for the very short and rapidly irritating background music…



» Two pink hippos… isn't that one of the days of Christmas?

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 68% Somewhat fiddly to get going, but easy to play.
AESTHETICS: 78% Nice, stylised graphics but annoying in-game music.
PLAYABILITY: 82% A pleasant way to kill 20 minutes.
LONGEVITY: 76% Quite a bit of fun to play in short bursts.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 82%

BARGAIN HUNT

HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japanese auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over a hundred different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it.

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. As you may have noticed, we've changed the theme recently and are looking at specific categories. This month we take a look at the Zelda series

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£4.57**



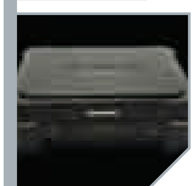
ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£14.02**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**

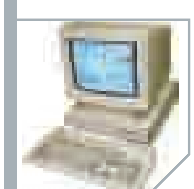


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**

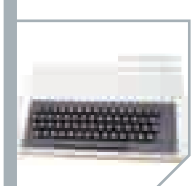


PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released.
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

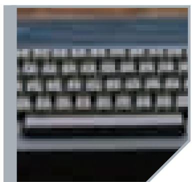
ACORN



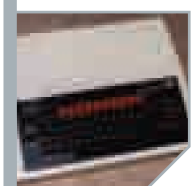
ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) with games**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built-in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor.



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($165+)**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- GET DEXTER
- XOR
- SORCERY +



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE

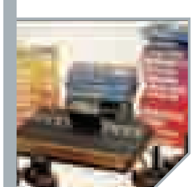


APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) with games**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

ROCKING HORSE SHIT
HEN'S TEETH
LUCKY FIND
EBAY REGULAR
CAR-BOOT SALE BARGAIN

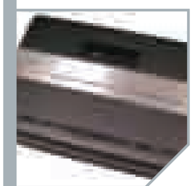


5200

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.

- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.

- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES

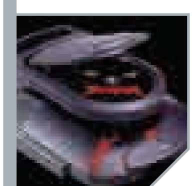


JAGUAR

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!

- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**

Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!

- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD



LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.

- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



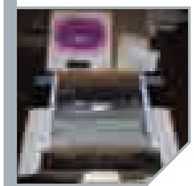
ST

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**

This is an Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models available, of various specifications.

- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) prices fluctuate wildly**

Ultra-rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**

Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.

- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN (ATMARK)

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**

A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. Its high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.

- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



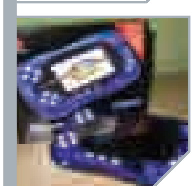
WONDERSWAN (B/W)

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL

» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.

- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA 500/600/1200

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) more with games, depending on model**

Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models with differing specs. The Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.

- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**

The less well-known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.

- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART

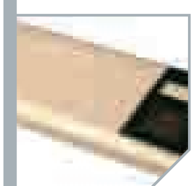


C64

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

One of the bestselling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.

- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID

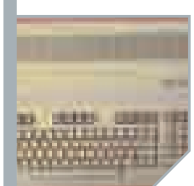


C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.

- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND



C128

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

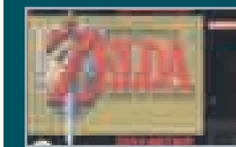


CDTV

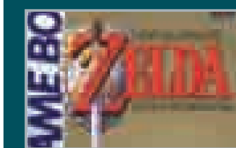
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

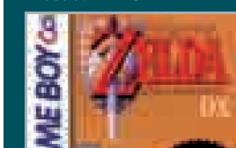
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
System: **SNES**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£17.89**



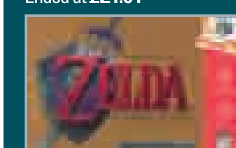
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£26.68**



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING DX
System: **Game Boy Color**
Normally sells for **£10+**
Ended at **£17.45**



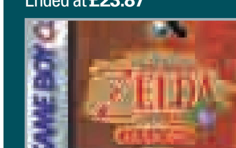
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
System: **N64**
Normally sells for **£10+**
Ended at **£21.01**



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK
System: **N64**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£16.48**



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF SEASONS
System: **Game Boy Color**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£23.87**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.

- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**

The computer that established the Commodore brand.

- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**

Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!

- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.

- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…

- DIET COKE 500ML
- LILT 500ML
- LUCOZADE 500ML



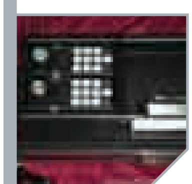
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

More insanity from the Land of the Rising Sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio had hoped it would do better than its PV-1000 console released in 1983.



FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) from the USA**

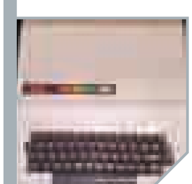
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**

Coleco's third-generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.

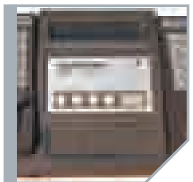
- CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) very cheap on eBay**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived, though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.

- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Failed console by Emerson that had numerous different clones released, as well.

- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, it was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.

- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act. Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



ORIC-1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products International. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.

- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**

After manufacturing MSX machines, Sony re-entered the games hardware market and this time took it over. There are countless excellent PS games. It was later re-released as the PSone, which is more expensive but looks much nicer.

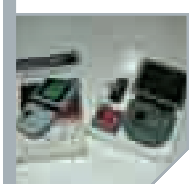
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPÉ
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) allegedly for a mint system**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupé was a unique 8-bit British home computer that didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.

- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.



TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

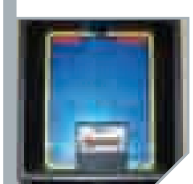
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.

- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

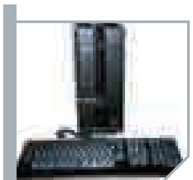
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.

- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

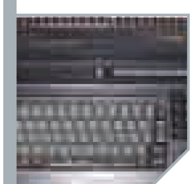
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent home-brew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

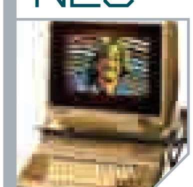


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

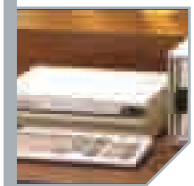
NEC



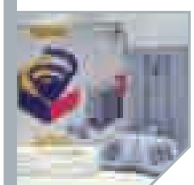
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two systems' Hu-Cards are not compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) massive fluctuations**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- PC KID
- OUTRUN



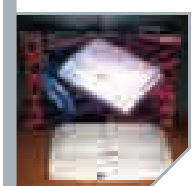
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) prices can fluctuate**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had six games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PC-E and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PC-E DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PC-E/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

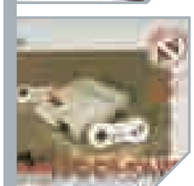


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped-down white version of the PC-E Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a six-button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over 1,000 games to choose from!

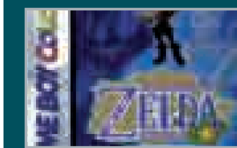


FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.

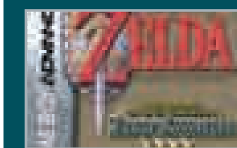


FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

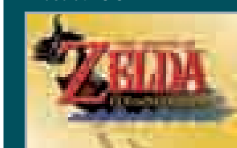
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES
System: **Game Boy Color**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£10.36**



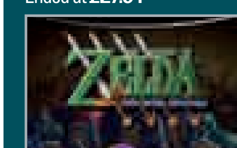
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
System: **GBA**
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£8.53**



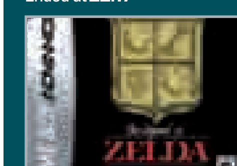
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
System: **GameCube**
Normally sells for **£13**
Ended at **£8.51**



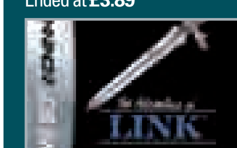
LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES
System: **GameCube**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£27.54**

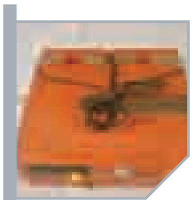


THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
System: **GBA**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£2.17**



ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK
System: **GBA**
Normally sells for **£7**
Ended at **£3.89**

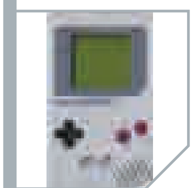




SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



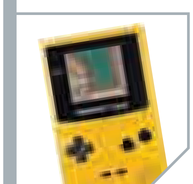
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yokoi.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite its age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact Game Boy, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic Game Boy. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge-based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought-after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of its cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and it's very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72-pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of the company's most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from 1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips. The 200 series consists of front-loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) more with DVC**
This is the consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000 that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



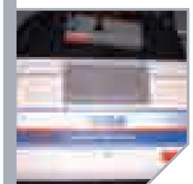
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance its capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- SKIES OF ARCADIA
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. With add-on tuner, could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



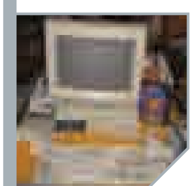
SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history. The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) according to eBay**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad

hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

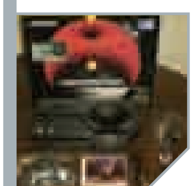


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) more with games**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook-style boxes.

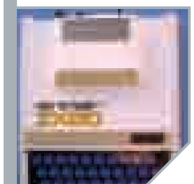
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse that, despite an amazing catalogue of games, never really took off.

- BURNING RANGERS
- RADIANT SILVERGUN
- PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

SINCLAIR

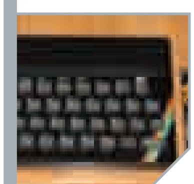


ZX80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
- SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM+
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



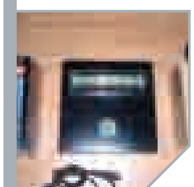
ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, the Spectrum was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK



NEO-GEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High-powered home system by SNK. Features many high-quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEO-GEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) multi-slot systems cost more**
High-powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home-based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of Neo-Geo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted.)

- METAL SLUG 3
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- BLAZING STAR

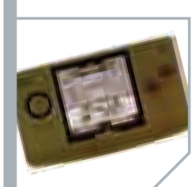


NEO-GEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEO-GEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based Neo-Geo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of Neo-Geo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHODOWN RPG



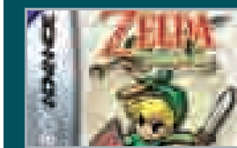
NEO-GEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



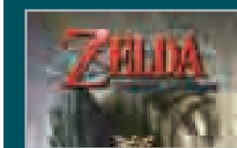
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld Neo-Geo systems by SNK that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system, though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

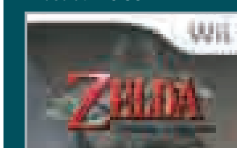
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP
System: **GBA**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£15.23**



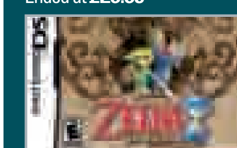
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
System: **GameCube**
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£42.01**



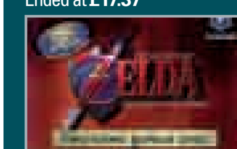
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS
System: **Wii**
Normally sells for **£15**
Ended at **£10.56**



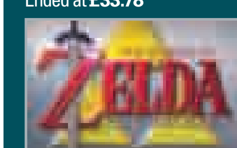
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS
System: **DS**
Normally sells for **£30**
Ended at **£26.59**



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
System: **GameCube**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£17.37**

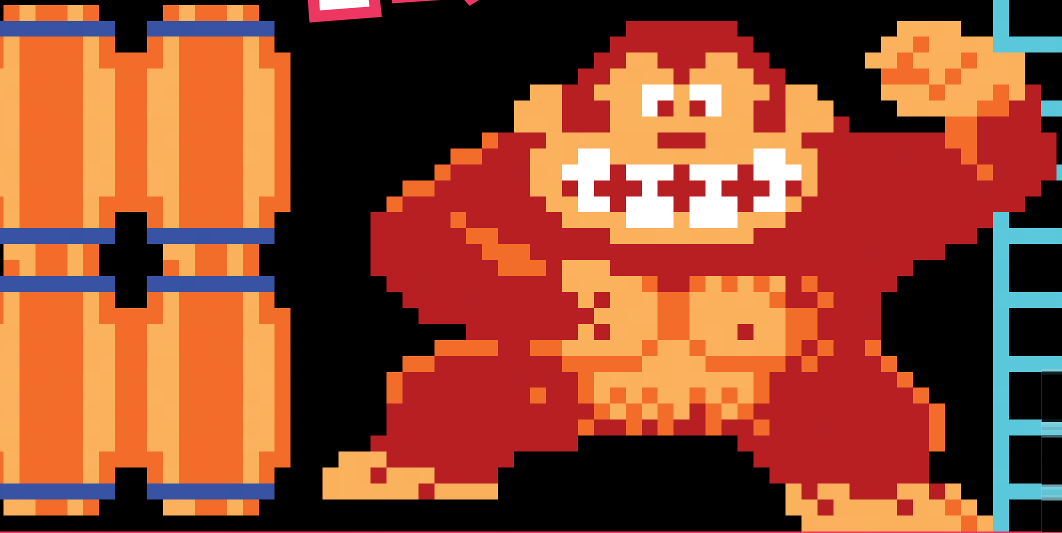


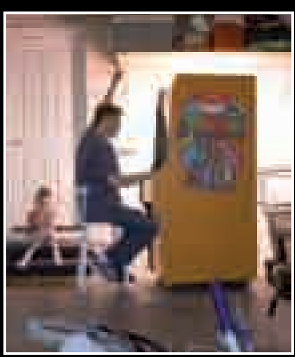
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA COLLECTOR'S EDITION
System: **GameCube**
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£33.78**



retro GAMER

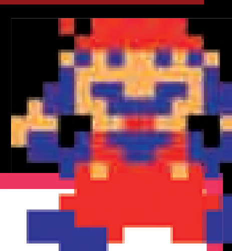
Monkey Trouble





THE MAKING OF… THE KING OF KONG

IT'S BEEN HAILED AS THE GREATEST VIDEOGAME FILM OF ALL TIME, BUT WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED DURING THE FILMING OF THE KING OF KONG? RETRO GAMER GOES BEHIND THE SCENES AND INTERVIEWS ALL THE KEY PLAYERS. PREPARE TO BE SHOCKED



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE…

» We talk to the creators of the excellent *Ridge Racer* and discover how they turned a hit coin-op into the must-have PlayStation game

» Konami has been making videogames for three decades and has a wealth of hit licences to its name, including *Pro Evolution Soccer* and *Metal Gear Solid*. Learn how it all started next issue

» Find out how Westwood Studios turned its *Eye Of The Beholder* game into one of *Dungeons & Dragons'* most successful videogame franchises

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RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO MALC JENNINGS, OWNER OF THE EXCELLENT AMSTRAD SITE CPC ZONE

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent resource site that's dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another superb Atari site that covers every single machine from the 2600 to arcade classics.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum that caters for an Australian audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Excellent site for the Amstrad range of computers with all the latest news and reviews.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
Brilliant Amiga website run by Kim Lemon, the owner of the excellent Lemon 64.

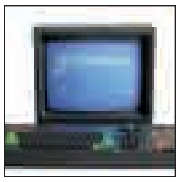
MAC RETRO
www.macretro.tk
Brilliant site that's dedicated to getting emulators up and running on the Mac.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's AES and MVS systems, but there's still lots of different coverage to enjoy.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Not just Sega focused but dedicated to covering as many arcade games as possible.

NTSC-UK
http://ntsc-uk.domino.org/
Largely devoted to import games, but there is a retro section that offers useful advice on rare imports.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
http://old-computers.com
If you thought the Atari 2600 was ancient, you may want to visit this fascinating site.



Retro Gamer: When did you set CPC Zone up?
Malc Jennings: CPC Zone was set up around September 2000. The design was originally based on the Napster layout, which was quite some time ago. It was originally written in nothing but basic HTML, but is now coded in PHP.

RG: Why did you choose the Amstrad CPC?
MJ: The Amstrad CPC was the first computer I ever personally owned. My uncle had everything from the Dragon 32 to the C64 by that point; he even owned a BBC Micro (which, showing my age now, we used at school), but I didn't get my own computer until the late-Eighties. The Amstrad was without a doubt the best value for money, as it came with a bunch of free games, so it was snapped up one Christmas and I guess CPC Zone is my way of preserving those memories.

RG: What gives CPC Zone the edge over similar websites?
MJ: The central point of CPC Zone now is the game listings, with well over 3,000 titles covered. Each one of those pages contains a synopsis, screens from the game or application, cover artwork (including alternative covers for different price ranges and markets), marketing material from magazines to posters, game instructions (based on the original inlay), loading screen comparisons with other formats such as the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64, comments, ratings, reviews and direct links to outside resources such as Lemon64 or World of Spectrum.

In terms of information on the software that was once available for the Amstrad, I think I'm right in saying that CPC Zone is the biggest and most comprehensive and it is always updated with new features and ideas.

RG: What's the most popular part of the website?
MJ: This can be split into two sections. A lot of people spend time surfing around the game pages and finding who did what on which game or are looking for that classic game that they can't remember the name of. Likewise, registered members spend time on the forums talking about upcoming projects, events, new game releases or playing ranked games against one another, where a different game is selected each week and everyone goes off to play it.

RG: How can our readership contribute?
MJ: Members can contribute by writing reviews, submitting cheats, game synopses, instructions, cover art, marketing material, ideas or any corrections to our game pages. If you don't feel like doing that then why not browse around the site and rate or comment on your favourite or least favourite games. You can find all the information you need in our forums.

> "THE CENTRAL POINT OF CPC ZONE NOW IS THE GAME LISTINGS, WITH WELL OVER 3,000 CPC TITLES COVERED"

RG: What's your favourite Amstrad game of all time and why?
MJ: *Rock Star Ate My Hamster* by Codemasters. I was a big fan of Michael Jackson in the Eighties and from the moment I saw the box art I had to pick it up. It's one of the funniest games from that period and one of the first of its type (parody business sim), I loved the cartoon-style graphics like the run-down office you work in, the crazy drawings of pop stars such as Elton John, Michael Jackson, George Michael (all of which had slightly different names for legal reasons) and the tabloid headlines that would hit when you did something wrong or pulled a publicity stunt. I spent many hours on that game and still go back to it today.

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

CPC Zone
www.cpczone.net



There are plenty of excellent CPC sites on the net, but few of them go to the same lengths as Malc Jennings' excellent CPC Zone. It's an amazing resource site that boasts a stunning amount of reviews (well over 3,000), lots of detailed information about the games and thousands of screenshots.

CPC Zone also happens to feature an extremely busy forum, with a group of members who are only too happy to help out whenever and however they can.

Even if you're not a fan of Sir Alan Sugar's machine, you should visit the site, if only so you can appreciate what a true labour of love looks like. If you enjoy the CPC, then be prepared, as this is what heaven no doubt feels like.

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

RACKET BOY
http://racketboy.com/
There's a definite Sega slant to Racketboy, but it's a lot of fun and boasts a bubbly forum.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega – there's tons of Sega music to listen to.

RETRO101
www.retro101.co.uk
It's only just sprung up, but Retro101 is proving popular with some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game's market courtesy of Shane Monroe.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com/index.php
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/themanor33/TRBv2/
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SHOOT THE CORE
www.shootthecore.moonpod.com
Excellent site that loves shmups of all descriptions.

SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Absolutely brilliant website that's dedicated to the best gaming genre of all time.

VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Your definitive stop for all that is Virtual Console related.

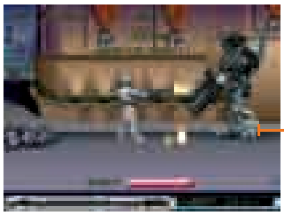
WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

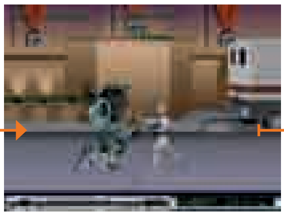
If you want to add your website to our expanding directory please contact Darran at darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk



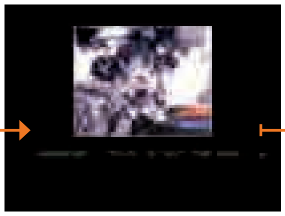
ROBOCOP 2

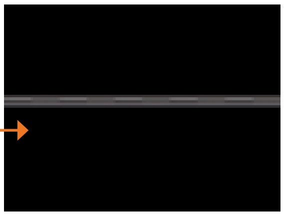
Murphy's back, but this time instead of facing off against 40 versions of ED-209, he has to apprehend a drug-taking RoboCop 2 prototype called Caine, who throws a mental. Here's how it all pans out











SCREEN 1

"Drop it!" hollers a rather portly looking RoboCop, as he enters the presentation room at Omni Consumer Products (OCP) for a final climatic showdown with Caine, the giant metal drug-dependant menace.

SCREEN 2

Just like in the movie, RoboCop begins by softening Caine up a little bit before going downtown and sticking his arm into Caine's rib cage so that he can rummage around inside to try to find a power switch.

SCREEN 3

Finding his brain rather than the power switch, RoboCop pulls out the villain-jelly, tosses it to the ground and quickly stamps on it. (Probably, we don't actually seen this particular part happen in the game).

SCREEN 4

While the film kind of ended on a high note, the game chooses to end on a morose and pointless low, with a screenshot of four police officers standing behind RoboCop with their guns poised.

SCREEN 5

The game then ends with a strip of white noise to (we can only assume) give the impression that a plug has been yanked on RoboCop. It's a shame the filmmakers didn't follow suit, *RoboCop 3* was a load of rubbish.